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Editorial

This edition of *JEBS* offers a collection of papers presented at the European Baptist Theology Teachers' Conference which took place, along with the Fourth Forum of the Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools, at IBTS in June 2006. Participants of the conference reflected on the theme of 'Spirituality and Ethnicity' and on the contribution of theological education to Baptist identity and spiritual formation.

Using history as a medium, Dr Ian Randall (UK) addresses the issue of shaping spiritual leaders by taking a closer look at the 150 years of theological education and spiritual formation at Spurgeon's College, London. He emphasises the original vision of the College founder for establishing a 'truly spiritual college' and connects Spurgeon's vision with the contemporary realities of 'earthed' holistic spirituality as an important part of training for ministry.

Dr Paul Sanders (Lebanon) reflects on the evangelical identity and spirituality in the Middle Eastern and North African ethnic contexts. He associates identity with ethnicity and reviews the dynamics of their interrelations. Taking a lead from the biblical view on ethnicity and identity, he reflects further on eight specific challenges that evangelicals experience in relating their ethnic identity to Christian spirituality in the Islamic context.

As the current Coordinator for the Network of the Scandinavian Academy for Leadership and Theology, Dr Roland Spjuth (Sweden) reviews the theme from the perspective of secularist and individualistic Scandinavian cultures. He is probing into the challenges posed by a culture of fragmentation, self-centredness and subjective well-being to the sense of Christian belonging. Admitting the pervasive cultural influences on Christian theological education, he is looking at James Wm McClendon's communitarian insights as a remedy in providing for integrated spirituality, community formation and togetherness.

The theme of spirituality and ethnicity is taken further by Dr Henk Bakker's reflections on challenges faced by theological education in globalised pluralistic and multi-ethnic Dutch culture. He suggests overcoming loneliness and estrangement and developing robust Christian spirituality of togetherness by building upon the insights into the *perichoresis* of the Trinity developed by the Eastern Fathers.

The Revd Dr Parush R Parushev
Academic Dean, IBTS

'To give the first place to spiritual fervour': Priorities for seminary education

In 1987 the Association of Theological Schools in the USA drew together twenty-three members for a research seminar on the question: 'In what important respects, if any, is character formation central to theological education?' The focus was North America but the issues are relevant to Europe. Major papers were presented by George Lindbeck (Yale Divinity School) and David Tracy (Divinity School, University of Chicago), with responses from – among others – Douglas John Hall (School of Theology, McGill University), Jane I. Smith (Iliff School of Theology) and Robert Meye (Fuller Theological Seminary). To some extent the focus moved from discussion of character formation to the broader (as I see it) issue of spiritual formation. Three different views were offered about the extent to which such formation should be a programmatic part of theological education. The first view identified theological education with formation. The second did not make this identification but saw spiritual formation as a necessary element in theological education. In the third view it was not possible to teach spiritual formation.¹ George Lindbeck's paper, 'Spiritual Formation and Theological Education', has proved to be prophetic. His analysis was that spirituality had 'tended to be banished from theological education even as an object of study'. He anticipated, however, that this could change, and that within seminaries there would be 'greater attention to spirituality' in the future.² This is indeed what has happened. The greatly increased attention given to spiritual formation has been a marked feature of seminary education in the past two decades.

In this study I want to reflect on the issue of theological education and spiritual formation by looking at Spurgeon's College, London, a European seminary which is 150 years old this year, having been started by Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the early years of his remarkable ministry in London, a ministry stretching over three decades until his death in 1892.³ During most of the past 150 years it has been the largest Baptist seminary

¹ D H Kelsey, 'Reflections on a Discussion of Theological Education as Character Formation', *Theological Education*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1988), pp. 62-75.

² G Lindbeck, 'Spiritual Formation and Theological Education', in *Theological Education*, Vol. 24, Supplement 1 (1988), pp. 10-32. Other papers included in this volume are D Tracy, 'Can Virtue be Taught? Education, Character, and the Soul', D J Hall, 'Theological Education as Character Formation?', J I Smith, 'Spiritual Awareness and the Formation of Character', and R P Meye, 'Theological Education as Character Formation'. For further reflection on these discussions see R J Neuhaus, ed., *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992).

³ The best recent biography of Spurgeon is P S Kruppa, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress* (New York: Garland Pub., 1982). There is scope for further work on Spurgeon.

in Europe. Out of all Spurgeon's many endeavours, the College was, he insisted, his 'first-born and best beloved'. 'This is my life's work, to which I believe God has called me', he said, '...To preach the Gospel myself, and to train others to do it, is my life's object and aim.'⁴ I want to draw out some themes in the area of spiritual formation that were important to Spurgeon and attempt to see how these have been re-interpreted in the life of the College.⁵ In 1998, in 'Traditions of Spiritual Practice and the Practice of Theology', published in *Theology Today*, David Tracy argued: 'The devastating separation of spirituality and theology in theological education must be undone.' He suggested that as part of that enterprise it was important to 'face and heal the separations modernity has bequeathed us and postmodernity is happily undoing: the separation of feeling and thought, form and content, practice and theory'.⁶ Spurgeon's College is examined here as an example of one tradition of spiritual practice. In 1870 Spurgeon, as President of the College (the Pastors' College was the name at that time), said in the College's 'Annual Report': 'It appears to us that the maintenance of a truly spiritual College is probably the readiest way in which to bless the churches.'⁷ The emphasis on 'a truly spiritual College' was at the heart of Spurgeon's concept of ministerial training.

There are now a considerable number of books that offer accounts of how individual theological colleges or seminaries have developed.⁸ Also some journal articles have looked at specific themes within the stories of well-known seminaries. In 2003 Darrell Guder wrote an illuminating article, 'From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology', in which he traced the way that thinking within Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA had developed in the area of mission and theological education from the nineteenth century to the present.⁹ The same year saw the publication in *Theological Education* of a study by H. Frederick Reisz, Jr., looking at how spiritual formation is assessed in a seminary community. Reisz used as an

⁴ W Y Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), p. 227.

⁵ I have drawn out other themes in *A School of the Prophets* (London: Spurgeon's College, 2005).

⁶ D Tracy, 'Traditions of Spiritual Practice and the Practice of Theology', *Theology Today*, Vol. 55 (July 1998), pp. 240-1.

⁷ *Annual Paper Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with the Pastors' College* [titles vary a little – hereafter *AP*], 1870, p. 4.

⁸ See, for example, my account of the origins, development and impact of London Bible College (now London School of Theology), *Educating Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000). For an illuminating and also highly entertaining treatment of two (deliberately unnamed) theological schools in the USA, see J W Carroll *et. al.*, *Being There* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁹ D L Guder, 'From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology', *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. 24, No. 1, New Series (2003), p. 36. For background on missional church and missional theology see D L Guder, ed., *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).

example his own institution, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.¹⁰ Within the Baptist context William Clemmons, retired Professor of Christian Spirituality and Myers Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lombard, Illinois, wrote, in 2004, a review article about spiritual formation in Baptist seminaries in America during the past twenty-five years. Clemmons drew especially from illuminating work done by E. Glenn Hinson and Molly T. Marshall.¹¹ This study of Spurgeon's College will interact with these and other studies and will seek to explore some of the aspects of formation within a European Baptist seminary. My intention is to seek to contribute to ongoing reflection within European Baptist life about this issue.¹²

A crucial element in C.H. Spurgeon's thinking about the spiritual development of ministers was the belief that healthy spirituality flourished when people were in touch with ordinary life – rather than detached from it. His vision was for an 'earthy' spirituality. This was clearly set out by Spurgeon in his magazine *The Sword and the Trowel* in 1870 (fourteen years after the College was founded), when he spoke about the life of the students at the College:

The young brethren [until the 1960s all students were male] are boarded generally in twos and threes, in the houses of our friends around the Tabernacle ...The plan of separate lodging we believe to be far preferable to having all under one roof, for by the latter mode men are isolated from general family habits... The circumstances of the families who entertain our young friends are generally such that they [the students] are not elevated above the social position which in all probability they will have to occupy in future years.¹³

Spurgeon did not want a College community isolated from real life. In 1923, when the College moved to its present site in South London,¹⁴ it became a residential community – a move away from Spurgeon's ideal – but with the growth of congregation-based training from the 1980s this changed. Within English Baptist Colleges the congregation-based model

¹⁰ H F Reisz, Jr., 'Assessing Spiritual Formation in Christian Seminary Communities', *Theological Education*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2003), pp. 29-40.

¹¹ W Clemmons, 'Spiritual Formation in Seminary Education', *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (2004), pp. 41-66. For further Baptist contributions over this period see A Davis and W Rowatt, eds., *Formation for Christian Ministry* (Louisville, Kentucky: Review and Expositor, 1988), especially the essay by Bill J Leonard, 'The Spiritual Development of the Minister', pp. 79-93.

¹² For an outstanding contribution to this reflection see the volume of papers published by IBTS: P F Penner, ed., *Theological Education as Mission* (Prague: IBTS, 2005).

¹³ *The Sword and the Trowel* [hereafter *S and T*], April 1870, p. 149.

¹⁴ The College began in the basement of Spurgeon's church, The Metropolitan Tabernacle, at the Elephant and Castle, London, and then later moved to a nearby building.

was introduced first at Northern Baptist College, Manchester, and then at Regent's Park College, Oxford. Spurgeon's followed. The most notable innovations in Baptist ministerial training in England in the 1970s took place at Northern, where the 'Alternative Pattern of Training' was pioneered. Michael Taylor, the Principal at Northern, had in mind 'not a quasi-academic community but one that is actively engaged in mission in an actual situation'.¹⁵ The church-based pattern at Spurgeon's, which now applies to about two-thirds of ministerial students, is that they spend two days a week in College, one day in personal study, and three days working for a church – either serving as part-time pastors of smaller churches or working in a team of ministers in a larger church.

For Spurgeon's College and for the wider Baptist tradition of ministerial training, intentional church experience is formative. All College students have supervised church ministry experience. C.H. Spurgeon saw the connections between the College and the worshipping life of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where he was minister, as vital. Involvement in church activities kept students in touch with the realities of ministry. Church involvement, said the first Principal of the College, George Rogers, in 1866, 'contributes much to their [the students] social and spiritual welfare'. A great deal of this involvement was enjoyable, although there was also a need to learn about more difficult congregational issues such as church discipline. Rogers argued that lack of contact with 'a flourishing Church' was a 'serious deficiency in a College education'.¹⁶ In the course of the ten years following its commencement, the College (as Rogers noted in 1867) increased rapidly – from one student to between eighty and ninety.¹⁷ Rogers himself, who was not a Baptist but was a Congregational minister, was described by Spurgeon in 1870 as someone 'of Puritanic stamp, deeply learned, orthodox in doctrine, judicious, witty, devout, earnest, liberal in spirit'.¹⁸ The relationship between Spurgeon and Rogers was marked by mutual appreciation. In the 1880s Rogers reflected on how the College's connection with 'a pastorate of great order, extent, and vitality' had produced results that had 'exceeded the most sanguine expectations'. The real work in ministry, he added, was being done by those ministers who prized spirituality.¹⁹

¹⁵ M H Taylor, 'Ministerial Training and Theological Education', *The Fraternal*, No. 164 (May 1972), p. 18-26.

¹⁶ *S and T*, March 1866, pp. 137-8.

¹⁷ G Rogers, 'An Outline of the Origin, History, Method and Success of the Pastor's College', in *Outline of the Lord's Work by the Pastor's College* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1867), pp. 19-20.

¹⁸ *S and T*, April 1870, p. 146.

¹⁹ *AP*, 1883-84, p. 6.

By emphasising churchly formation, Spurgeon's College tradition has not simply equated theological education in the classroom with spiritual formation. Rather, as Gordon T. Smith argued in 'Spiritual Formation in the Academy: A Unifying Model' (1996), the view has been that 'spiritual formation within the academic setting is most effective when the classroom is both affirmed *and* complemented, and where vital elements of the spiritual life are nurtured, taught, and encouraged in settings in addition to the classroom'. For Smith, these other elements are experiences of retreat, service, spiritual direction, and worship. He adds that seminaries 'most able to integrate spiritual formation and education are those with a clear sense of their history, their heritage, and their spiritual tradition'.²⁰ Gordon Smith's stress on integration is in tune with David Tracy's hope that there is currently an 'undoing' of the separation of feeling and thought, form and content, practice and theory. However, Smith does not explore, as the Spurgeon's tradition has done since its beginnings, the ways in which there can be an integration of church and seminary. The Spurgeonian vision – certainly not always achieved – has been to keep students in close touch with church life and with 'ordinary theology',²¹ or 'primary theology', as explored (for example) in a conference at IBTS led by Parush Parushev on 'Primary and Secondary Theologies in Baptist Communities'.²² Spurgeon believed that students who lost touch with 'ordinary theology' and whose aim was simply to parade their advanced theological knowledge would fail to touch ordinary people's hearts.²³ This approach resonates with Susanne Johnson's argument for the place of *orthokardia* ('a heart rightly formed before God') as well as *orthodoxis* and *orthopraxis*, and it is significant that Johnson speaks of theologians and educators accepting that 'the primary means for spiritual formation is living closely in a community of believers who themselves know well the Christian Story and who are deeply and actively engaged in its practices'.²⁴

²⁰ G T Smith, 'Spiritual Formation in the Academy: A Unifying Model', *Theological Education*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1996).

²¹ See J Astley, *Ordinary Theology* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2002).

²² Held at IBTS, 24-28 August 2004. Proceedings of the conference are to be published by IBTS. For the background thinking see J W McClendon, Jr., and J M Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994) (Originally *Understanding Religious Convictions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), and McClendon's *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) and his three-volume systematic theology: *Ethics* (1986), *Doctrine* (1994), and *Witness* (2000), all by Abingdon Press. McClendon speaks about first-order and second-order theology, the latter being 'theology about theology'.

²³ *AP*, 1870, p. 7.

²⁴ S Johnson, 'Christian Spiritual Formation in an Age of "Whatever"', *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (2001), pp. 312, 328. There are other helpful articles on spiritual formation in this volume. For a more extended series of arguments in favour of close bonds between seminaries and congregations see S

This raises questions about the relationship between scholarship and spirituality. It was a regular complaint in early Spurgeonian rhetoric that there was too much stress on scholarship in the seminary training offered for ministry. ‘Collegiate training’, George Rogers noted in 1866, ‘had hitherto been limited to a particular class of candidates, and to a particular kind and amount of education... The literary attainments of our ministers, it has been said, must advance with the literature of the age.’ Rogers asked if students trained in this ethos were known to have more impact as ministers and he answered with a resounding ‘No!’ It was against this background that the College had been formed and had developed – it was claimed – as a ‘new method of collegiate training, better adapted to the real wants of the age’.²⁵ Many of the College students in the early decades planted new Baptist churches.²⁶ One of Spurgeon’s passionate concerns was to reach the working classes. ‘The language of half our pulpits’, he pronounced in 1870, ‘is alienating the working classes from public worship’, and in typical style he stated: ‘Now the devil does not care for your dialectics, and eclectic homiletics, or Germanic objectives and subjectives; but pelt him with Anglo-Saxon in the name of God, and he will shift his quarters.’²⁷ From the beginning of the College’s life, as David Bebbington puts it, there was ‘no attempt to compete for scholarly distinctions or to turn theology from a vocational into an academic subject’.²⁸

Yet the College did not see careful scholarship and spirituality as in complete conflict. Indeed in 1870, with the overstatement to which he was prone, Spurgeon lamented the ‘unlettered condition’ of many people in England and blamed the poor English educational system, which was, he considered, far behind that in Scotland.²⁹ W.Y. Fullerton (who was a student at the College, then a pastor-evangelist and finally Home Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society), in describing the Friday afternoons Spurgeon spent with the College students, recalled that Spurgeon would read from shapers of English literature such as John Milton, William

Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1989) and also J H Leith, *Crisis in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), esp chapters 3-5. Johnson is a Methodist and Leith a Presbyterian.

²⁵ *S and T*, January 1866, pp. 41-3. For more on the ‘real’ work, as understood by Rogers and others, see M J Quicke and I M Randall, ‘“The Real Wants of the Age”: Spurgeon’s College, London’, *American Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (1999), pp. 118-30.

²⁶ I S Drummond, ‘The Spurgeon Legacy’, CNA BA Dissertation (1990), p. 44. This dissertation has a detailed analysis of the church planting strategy and achievements of Spurgeon.

²⁷ *S and T*, April 1871, p. 218; cf. *AP*, 1870, pp. 5-6. Also see D W Bebbington, ‘Spurgeon and the Common Man’, *Baptist Review of Theology*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1995), pp. 63-75.

²⁸ D W Bebbington, ‘Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education’, in D G Hart and R A Mohler, Jr., eds., *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (1996), pp. 219-20.

²⁹ *AP*, 1870, p. 12.

Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.³⁰ In his expository work Spurgeon – as is clear from his famous *Commenting and Commentaries* – read remarkably widely, and included in his reading a range of viewpoints as well as fairly obscure authors.³¹ Every encouragement was given in the College to study Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Spurgeon believed that with higher levels of education becoming more general, preachers with limited knowledge would find it harder to obtain a hearing.³² Each student should, therefore, seek to progress. Spurgeon advised one former student: 'Never be satisfied with yourself, but go on growing, for we need men fitted to take the better positions, even more than we do the rank and file. Stick to your study even when you are in the midst of ministerial work, for you must be replenished continually or you cannot give out to others.'³³ In 1873 Spurgeon proudly noted that one student had come first in the competition for a respected Dr Williams's scholarship.³⁴ Spurgeon's experience with College students over three decades confirmed his view that a number of educative elements were essential in training: knowledge of the scriptures, of theology and of church history; study of language, including biblical languages, and good general knowledge; the ability to communicate well in preaching; and awareness of how to conduct the work of the church.³⁵

The central place of spiritual experience, however, was always insisted upon, and in 1886 David Gracey, a fine scholar who followed George Rogers as Principal, pronounced: 'In this College we do not put our trust in scholastic distinctions and academical honours; but in the Spirit of the Lord. While, therefore, you do all in your power to secure a sound reputation, we trust that you will place conspicuous emphasis on the unction of the Divine Spirit.'³⁶ The stress on 'unction' (spiritual power) was typically Spurgeonic. One former student said Spurgeon saw two things as necessary – 'gumption [common sense] and unction'.³⁷ Archibald McCaig, a Scot who served as College Principal for the first quarter of the twentieth century, explained that his priority was not to have students who could compose 'finished literary essays', but to produce 'Scriptural, Evangelical, Soul-winning preachers' who had 'spiritual force'. C.H. Spurgeon's son Charles contrasted the College with some educational

³⁰ Fullerton, *Spurgeon*, p. 233.

³¹ C H Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries... Together with a Catalogue* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1876).

³² *AP*, 1881-82, p. 6.

³³ J C Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1933), p. 181.

³⁴ *S and T*, April 1873, p. 147.

³⁵ *AP*, 1886-87, pp. 5-9.

³⁶ Reported in *S and T*, January 1897, p. 31.

³⁷ *S and T*, October 1903, p. 512 (W T Soper).

institutions in which ‘gain in mental culture often means loss in soul growth’.³⁸ McCaig spoke Russian and took a particular interest in the endeavours of a Latvian student at the College, William Fetler. In 1911 McCaig was in St Petersburg for the opening of a church building seating 2,000 people, which was associated with Fetler’s Russian Missionary Society.³⁹ McCaig advocated an explicitly missional spirituality: in a significant statement he pronounced that ‘while not despising scholarship, but giving all possible attention thereto, [the College] desires to give the first place to spiritual fervour’.⁴⁰ From the late 1950s, under the principalship of George Beasley-Murray, who combined exacting scholarship and spiritual commitment, a direction was set that has continued. Beasley-Murray was a leading New Testament scholar, producing seminal works such as *Jesus and the Future* (1954) and *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962).⁴¹ Alongside that, Beasley-Murray was the bearer of a missional tradition, commending the way Spurgeon’s sermons ‘blaze with love for Christ and a yearning for his hearers to be saved’.⁴² This was the message the College wished to disseminate.

The example of George Beasley-Murray, with his desire to pass on Spurgeon’s evangelistic convictions, points to something further about the way spirituality has been shaped within the life of the College. Much of it has taken place relationally. Within the formative period of the life of the College, Spurgeon was very keen to foster interaction between students and staff and between students. There was to be openness in the community. Parush Parushev has contrasted theological education within and for the ‘thick community of faith’, an education that shapes the identity of those who belong to it, with the ‘thin community’ of academic and public discourse, which is concerned only with academic pursuits according to the rules of the academic game.⁴³ George Rogers, who placed his stamp on the College’s formative development, wanted to undercut ideas of a community governed by an academic hierarchy. ‘No deference is required by any’, he commented, ‘that is not spontaneously given.’⁴⁴ It was a view that contrasted with much of the way Victorian society operated. David Gracey described how students were encouraged to voice their questions

³⁸ AP, 1901-02, pp. 5-7.

³⁹ For William Fetler (also known as Basil Malof) see J A Stewart, *A Man in a Hurry* (Asheville, NC: Russian Bible Society, n.d.) and J Wood, *Born in the Fire* (privately published, 1998).

⁴⁰ *S and T*, June 1906, p. 278.

⁴¹ See P Beasley-Murray, *Fearless for Truth: A Personal Portrait of the Life of George Beasley-Murray* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

⁴² *Spurgeon’s College Magazine*, Autumn 1947, pp. 3-4.

⁴³ P R Parushev, ‘Towards Convictional Theological Education: Facing challenges of contextualisation, credibility and relevance’, in Penner, ed., *Theological Education as Mission*, pp. 198-9.

⁴⁴ *S and T*, March 1866, pp. 137-8.

freely. This was a mark of a 'thick community'. 'Repression and the rule of red tape', Gracey insisted, 'are avoided.' Class work was described as 'free and elastic'.⁴⁵ Although some methods have changed, this kind of open and participative atmosphere is encouraged at the College. Engagement happens in classes and also in 'reflection' or 'pastoral' groups. The student body is divided into small groups of students and each has a leader, usually a tutor. They meet every week and discuss and pray about personal matters that students raise, pastoral issues, areas of spiritual development or academic issues. To a large extent the group follows the priorities set out by the students themselves.

Another aspect of relationships in the College has been the place of humour. Spurgeon had depressive periods, telling students that he knew 'by most painful experience what deep depression of spirit means',⁴⁶ but it is also clear that he, together with staff and students, greatly enjoyed the College's communal life. Once, when a day out together was announced by Spurgeon (who was always known as the Governor) one student shouted: 'A day out with the Governor! Glory!' It was noted that he had a revivalist Methodist background.⁴⁷ Engagement in study was done in creative ways which at times produced considerable laughter. Spurgeon enjoyed re-telling the story of a student who had to speak spontaneously on the word 'Zacchaeus'. He stood up and said, 'Mr President and brethren, my subject is Zacchaeus, and it is therefore most appropriate to me; for first, Zacchaeus was little of stature, as am I; secondly, Zacchaeus was up a tree; so am I; thirdly, Zacchaeus made haste to come down; and so will I.' He then sat down. The students urged him to go on, but Spurgeon took the view that the speech was perfect.⁴⁸ On one occasion (one of many such occasions) when Rogers was defending his belief in infant baptism with considerable humour – he spoke about himself as the mother hen of the College but one who was sitting on ducks' eggs – Spurgeon arrived at the College and began to join in the exchanges. Rogers said that another tutor, a Baptist, had been 'trying to put me down'. Spurgeon took up the phrase, applying it to the question of the Baptist mode of baptism (immersion), and told Rogers that 'I have been trying to do [that] for the last twenty years, you old sinner, and *you won't go down*'.⁴⁹ The College continues to seek to train in ways that are – as far as possible – enjoyable.

⁴⁵ *S and T*, June 1892, p. 279.

⁴⁶ G Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Cassell, n.d.), Vol. 2, pp. 287-8.

⁴⁷ *S and T*, April 1901, pp. 160-1.

⁴⁸ Fullerton, *Spurgeon*, pp. 237-8.

⁴⁹ C H Spurgeon, *Autobiography; Compiled from his Diary, Letters, and Records by his Wife and his Private Secretary*, Vol. 3 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), 4 vols., pp. 353-5.

What is also clear throughout the story of the College is the place of personal example. Gordon Smith has emphasised that a ‘definitive element in the formation of the student is the faculty member himself or herself – not the curriculum, not the academic program, not the co-curricular activities, and not even the chapel services.’⁵⁰ One of the early African-American students at Spurgeon’s College, T.L. Johnson, who had been a slave and after obtaining his freedom became a pastor in Colorado, came to the College in 1875 and wrote about his experiences.⁵¹ The account shows the role of the seminary’s leadership in giving an example of friendship. Johnson, nervous about study, was invited by one tutor to his home for extra personal tuition, and Johnson was also given ‘a very cordial welcome’ by the students. Johnson wrote about meeting Spurgeon: ‘His first words set me at ease, but his sympathetic kindness was beyond my highest hope. He took me by the hand... and wished me success... I felt so happy in his presence, and so at home with him.’⁵² Spurgeon believed in exemplars, including examples from the past such as the Puritan, Richard Baxter (whose spiritual and pastoral approach was summed up in his *Reformed Pastor*), or the eighteenth-century evangelist, George Whitefield.⁵³ Stephanie Paulsell, writing in *Theology Today* (1998), speaks about the lack of models for students thinking about their ministerial vocation in the context of their theological work. Although curricula ask students to integrate academic and field work, the intellectual and the spiritual, Paulsell suggests that ‘in many cases we ask students to do what we ourselves have not yet done’.⁵⁴ This has never been the approach at Spurgeon’s. Those who teach there see their own commitment to ministry as being central to their work for the College.

Because ministry is the focus of the training at Spurgeon’s, there has always been flexibility in the training, depending on someone’s previous experience in ministry. The College sought, and seeks, to develop students’ existing knowledge and gifts.⁵⁵ Students also bring their spiritual contribution to the community. Some have come with a desire to engage in wider mission; in the 1870s, for example, a ‘growing missionary spirit’ was evident.⁵⁶ Whatever their future ministry, Spurgeon insisted that those

⁵⁰ Smith, ‘Spiritual Formation in the Academy: A Unifying Model’, p. 91.

⁵¹ T L Johnson, *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave, or The Story of My Life in Three Continents* (Bournemouth: W Mate & Sons, 1909), pp. 78-80.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 88-9.

⁵³ Fullerton, *Spurgeon*, p. 235.

⁵⁴ S Paulsell, ‘Theological Table Talk’, *Theology Today*, Vol. 55 (July 1998), p. 231.

⁵⁵ For more see W J Allen, ‘Pathways to Leadership: The provision of education and training for leadership in the ordained ministry’, University of Wales PhD thesis (1999).

⁵⁶ AP, 1876-7, pp. 14-15.

training must be 'full of the Holy Ghost, called of God to their work, anointed, qualified, and divinely sustained'.⁵⁷ Spirituality was crucial. The framework, however, was flexible. The courses that students undertook in Spurgeon's time were often tailored to individual situations. Two/three years at College was the norm, but an assessment was made of each student's needs. In some cases further training was judged counter-productive since 'to detain them from their work is to repress their ardour without bestowing a compensatory advantage'. In other cases a longer period in College was recommended, so that students went out 'more thoroughly prepared'. Some churches called students away before the end of the course. When students were kept longer at College, Spurgeon recalled, 'the good deacons of the eager churches thought me a sort of harsh jailer, who locked up his prisoners'.⁵⁸ In the first half of the twentieth century the format of training became more uniform, but from the 1970s more flexibility was again evident. Some start on a one-day-a-week pattern. Most are training to be pastors of churches but some are training to be evangelists and the latter have a distinct pathway. A great deal of attention is given to seeking to fit training around the needs of the individual.

Having said that, there is a core theological and practical curriculum which is seen as necessary for proper formation. In 1874 Spurgeon addressed students and former students at the annual College Conference (which attracted about 400 people) on the importance of careful biblical interpretation and acquaintance with Christian tradition. His critique of those who neglected this was somewhat scathing:

Nowadays, we hear men tear a single sentence of Scripture from its connection, and cry, 'Eureka! Eureka!' as if they had found a new truth; and yet they have not discovered a diamond, but a piece of broken glass. Had they been able to compare spiritual things with spiritual, had they understood the analogy of the faith, and had they been acquainted with the holy learning of the great Bible students of past ages, they would not have been quite so fast in vaunting their marvellous knowledge.⁵⁹

In his analysis of spiritual formation in the academy, Gordon Smith has cautioned against relying on a plethora of approaches to spiritual formation – small groups, psychological tests, counselling – while failing to engage seriously with scripture. 'We urgently need', he argues, 'a coherent vision for theological education that grants scripture a central and defining

⁵⁷ *AP*, 1870, p. 4.

⁵⁸ *S and T*, June 1881, p. 303.

⁵⁹ *S and T*, May 1874, p. 221.

place.’ For him that is the way to integrate education and spirituality.⁶⁰ This perspective has been affirmed throughout the history of Spurgeon’s College. In the year 2000, David Coffey (then General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain),⁶¹ who trained at the College under George Beasley-Murray, recollected how Beasley-Murray gave priority to knowledge of the scriptures. David Coffey commented: ‘Those of us privileged to be taught by George will never forget his lectures on John. They frequently took wings and underlined that George was never happier than when he was expounding scripture.’ For Coffey, the strength of Beasley-Murray’s work as a teacher was his ability to make his outstanding biblical scholarship available in plain language.⁶²

While stressing biblically-grounded spirituality, Spurgeon’s College has attempted to incorporate a variety of spiritual disciplines into its process of formation. Spurgeon was a typical evangelical activist. ‘Brethren’, he once expostulated, ‘do something; *do something*; DO SOMETHING. While Committees waste their time over resolutions, do something. While Societies and Unions are making constitutions, let us win souls.’⁶³ He made clear his expectation that a minister trained at the College ‘works harder than any other man in the parish’.⁶⁴ But there was also a mystical element in Spurgeon, as evidenced above all by the way his spiritual life was sustained through weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper.⁶⁵ Also, he encouraged appreciation of creation, telling the students that anyone who forgets the humming of the bees among the heather, the song of birds in the woods, and the sighing of the wind among the pines, need not wonder if their heart forgets to sing and their soul grows heavy.⁶⁶ The activist spirit still prevails among the students, but the College has also tried to encourage the contemplative. Spurgeon encouraged students to have times of retreat and to ‘know themselves’. He commented: ‘The preacher should be great in the science of the heart, the philosophy of inward experience.’⁶⁷ This exercise in self-knowledge was not intended to foster introspection but to encourage wholeness – a holistic spiritual life. ‘What is holiness?’ Spurgeon asked. ‘Is it not wholeness of character? ... It is not morality, that is a cold, lifeless statue: holiness is life.’⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Smith, ‘Spiritual Formation in the Academy: A Unifying Model’, pp. 90-1.

⁶¹ Since 2005 David Coffey has been President of the Baptist World Alliance.

⁶² *College Record*, June 2000, p. 5.

⁶³ C H Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), p. 63.

⁶⁴ *AP*, 1885-86, p. 29.

⁶⁵ See I M Randall and T Grass, ‘Spurgeon and the Sacraments’, in A Cross, ed., *Baptist Sacramentalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 55-75.

⁶⁶ C H Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1906), p. 172.

⁶⁷ *S and T*, May 1874, p. 228; cf. *All-Round Ministry*, pp. 58-61.

⁶⁸ *S and T*, May 1874, p. 229.

Interest in the contemplative stream of Christian spirituality has grown in recent years within the College, as it has in other Baptist Colleges. Although in the 1920s Quiet Days were led by F.B. Meyer, a Baptist minister who affirmed practical mysticism,⁶⁹ the perception of students trained in the first half of the twentieth century was that they were given little knowledge of the Church's devotional literature or of mystical theology.⁷⁰ By the 1970s there were the beginnings of a more serious engagement in Baptist circles with contemplative spirituality and its place within spiritual formation. Glenn Hinson wrote on 'The Spiritual Formation of the Minister as a Person' in 1973, and in the following year his important book, *A Serious Call to a Contemplative Life-Style*, appeared.⁷¹ In 1988, within the British Baptist context, a Baptist Union Retreat Group was formed through the leadership of Margaret Jarman, a Baptist minister and a former student at Spurgeon's (the first female student). Annual/termly retreat days became a feature of Spurgeon's College life. In 1990 Colin Brown, an Anglican layman who had a particular interest in contemplative spirituality, was appointed to the staff at the College. This emphasis has been continued. Along with the teaching of spirituality, spiritual direction is offered, and those going into ministry are encouraged to have spiritual directors and to continue a discipline of retreats.⁷² By 1998 Molly Marshall could comment on the way Baptists, like other Protestants, were going to retreat centres, using spiritual directors, and incorporating silence and the *lectio divina* into their private prayer.⁷³ European Baptist seminaries such as Spurgeon's and IBTS have established links with the Northumbria Community, a Baptist-initiated community in the North-East of England operating within a monastic framework.

The teaching of spirituality at Spurgeon's since the mid-1990s has, to a large extent, followed ideas developed by Richard Foster about streams of spirituality.⁷⁴ Topics with which students engage include those outlined by Foster – contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical and sacramental streams – but they also look at other areas. The College has become much more diverse in recent years and at least one quarter of each new intake of students is minority ethnic, drawn especially from

⁶⁹ See I M Randall, *Spirituality and Social Change* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), chapter 5.

⁷⁰ *College Record*, May 1955, pp. 7-12.

⁷¹ E G Hinson, 'The Spiritual Formation of the Minister as a Person', *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1973), pp. 73-85; E G Hinson, *A Serious Call to a Contemplative Life-Style* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974).

⁷² I M Randall, 'A deeper spirituality', *Talk*, Spring 2004, pp. 18-19.

⁷³ M T Marshall, 'The Changing Face of Discipleship', *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (1998), p. 62. Marshall, in her article, draws from (among others) Eugene Peterson and Henri Nouwen, writers much used now in spiritual formation courses.

⁷⁴ R Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (London: HarperCollis/Fount, 1999).

churches in London.⁷⁵ Black presence within the College goes back to 1867 when James Magee, the first Black student, arrived from Toronto, Canada.⁷⁶ He was followed by T.L. Johnson in 1875 and then Calvin Richardson, from First Baptist Church, Washington, DC, in 1877, both of whom then undertake mission work in West Africa. Johnson's motto became 'Yours truly, for Africa'.⁷⁷ Black spirituality now has a place within the curriculum and is taught by a Black Baptist minister. Other topics covered include women and spiritual experience, spirituality and suffering, and spirituality and personality. From the 1960s onwards the College increasingly felt the impact of the charismatic movement. A survey of students conducted in 1989 showed that 80% saw themselves as charismatic, 64% claiming to have exercised the gift of tongues and 38% the gift of prophecy.⁷⁸ The primary spiritual influence, however, has remained mainstream evangelical spirituality. When Paul Beasley-Murray (who was the son of George) took up the College principalship in 1986 he identified with its 'proud evangelical and keenly evangelistic tradition'.⁷⁹ In similar vein, Nigel Wright, the current Principal, has articulated a typical evangelical missional vision for the College – to train 'attractive and evangelical ministers of the Gospel'.⁸⁰

There is also, as an integral part of spiritual formation at Spurgeon's, the discipline of daily prayer and worship together. Speaking in 1881 about the College's aims, Spurgeon said, regarding prayer, that in seeking 'the promotion of a vigorous spiritual life among those who are preparing to be under-shepherds of Christ's flock' he regarded 'frequent meetings for prayer' – these took place each morning and afternoon in College – as well fitted to maintain 'a high tone of spirituality'.⁸¹ The College chapel is the venue for daily College worship and is at the heart of the life of the community. In fact it has often been the place where some of the key aspects of training most obviously interact, where gifting has been discovered and where denominational, ecumenical and international vision has been inspired. In the 1980s it was common for the tutors to lead College chapel on most mornings, but since then students have taken a more regular role. Different worship styles, liturgies and traditions have

⁷⁵ For studies of spiritual formation in multi-ethnic settings see E Conde-Frazier, S S Kang and G A Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2004).

⁷⁶ For Magee's remarkable story see J H Magee, *The Night of Affliction and Morning of Recovery: An Autobiography* (Reprinted in Miami, Florida: Mnemosyne Publ., 1969).

⁷⁷ *S and T*, January 1880, pp. 42-3.

⁷⁸ *Baptist Times*, 21 December 1989, p. 10.

⁷⁹ *College Record*, Winter 1986, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *College Record*, November 2000, p. 2.

⁸¹ *S and T*, June 1881, p. 304.

been explored. The College chapel is always open for personal prayer and during Easter 2004 it was set out in such a way as to encourage meditation on the cross and the resurrection by individuals. This guided meditation was entitled 'The Journey'. Many students speak of the experience of community worship as having a lasting effect on their lives and ministries.⁸²

This exploration of how Spurgeon's College has sought to engage in spiritual formation has been largely positive. It is important to note, however, the disappointments. A minority (at times a significant minority) of those trained at the College have dropped out of Christian ministry. 'We have', said Spurgeon himself, 'our failures to deplore'.⁸³ One early example was Francis Ward Monck, the eighth student accepted by Spurgeon. He had a number of Baptist pastoral ministries but in the 1870s embraced spiritualism. Monck described in 1876 how 'spirits' began to give him his texts to preach, and 'controlling his vocal organ caused him to discourse logically and eloquently'. Monck became a travelling medium, claiming that his spirit guide was another former College student – who had died when in his twenties.⁸⁴ In response to an obvious need, methods were developed to seek to become aware of problems with students. Written notes from C.H. Spurgeon's era indicate how some early students were assessed. Some comments were acerbic: 'Talks before he is ready. *Could* think if he could be trained to keep his tongue from preventing him.' Some were more hopeful: 'A thick crust, but it is giving way, and I fancy there may be something underneath.' Others were enthusiastic, and proved sound indicators of future ministry. 'A man of great power. Much of the Welsh orator about him. A good student.'⁸⁵ In recent years students have been encouraged to evaluate their own personal development. Their comments are then discussed with a tutor and goals are set. Where there are serious doubts about a student in terms of ministry, there is a vocational suitability process which, on occasions, means that someone may not finally be commended for ordained ministry. It is more often the case that someone in this process, having been given goals to achieve and support to achieve them, is able to address and overcome the problems.⁸⁶

⁸² I am indebted to Debra Reid, a tutor at the College since the 1980s, for her reflections on College chapel.

⁸³ *AP*, 1884-85, p. 5.

⁸⁴ J L Randall, 'Francis Ward Monck and the Problems of Physical Mediumship', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (2003), pp. 243-59.

⁸⁵ *College Record*, April 1949, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁶ For further discussion see Reisz, 'Assessing Spiritual Formation in Christian Seminary Communities', pp. 29-39.

Conclusion

Spirituality has always been seen as an important part of the training for ministry offered by the College. In 1889 C.H. Spurgeon said that students on leaving the College often observed: 'I feared that in coming to College I might lose my simplicity of faith and spirituality of mind; but there has been no danger in this place... I feel I have been greatly helped in the heavenly life.'⁸⁷ During Spurgeon's time the stress on a robust spirituality was a notable feature of College life. Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, which feature famous lectures on preaching, also stress themes such as 'The Holy Spirit in Connection with Our Ministry'.⁸⁸ This article has sought to engage with what is being written about the role of seminaries specifically in the area of spiritual formation for ordained ministry and has suggested that Spurgeon's College has been marked by a particular set of convictions in relation to spiritual formation – that such formation should be earthy, churchly, missional, relational, flexible and centred on scripture and prayer. Inevitably there were and are tensions. How, for example, do scholarship and spirituality fit together? How are students to be reflective and active? Alongside the commitment to spiritual development there has been a core concern at the College for effectiveness in the practice of ministry, especially in preaching and in evangelistic and pastoral work. In 1993 Michael Quicke, as Principal, reiterating and affirming C.H. Spurgeon's belief that the College should train effective preachers, also spoke of his own convictions about ministry – which included crucial elements such as preaching and vision, but which, significantly, began with prayer.⁸⁹ There is also a commitment at Spurgeon's, as at all seminaries, to rigorous theological endeavour which engages with the challenges of contemporary society. But Archibald McCaig's statement, made 100 years ago, remains a powerful challenge – that this College 'while not despising scholarship, but giving all possible attention thereto, desires to give the first place to spiritual fervour'.⁹⁰

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⁸⁷ *S and T*, June 1889, p. 311.

⁸⁸ Fullerton, *Spurgeon*, p. 233.

⁸⁹ *College Record*, Autumn/Winter 1993, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁰ *S and T*, June 1906, p. 278.

Identity, Ethnicity and Spirituality

Some Personal and Practical Reflections from a Middle Eastern Context

Introduction

I write these lines as the American-born son of a Lebanese mother and Swedish father; also as an adopted French national and married to a French woman, and as a resident of Lebanon. My family name is an anglicised form of my adoptive German great-grandfather's name, Zander. My two older children live and work in France, whereas my youngest child is an adopted Lebanese girl who was abandoned on the steps of a Beirut evangelical orphanage (but that is another story ...). I belong, in one way or another, to three countries and carry within my 'DNA' several ethnicities and have acquired various identities. Such a multiplicity of ethnicities and identities is not an isolated case in today's Europe!

1. Some Reflections on Ethnicity and Identity

Identity and Ethnicity

This paper will associate the term 'ethnicity' with that of 'identity'. Ethnicity may be defined as a social group or category of the population ... set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality or culture, whereas 'identity' generally refers to 'the distinguishing character or personality of an individual' or one's individuality. There is also a psychological dimension to identity, that is, the relation established by psychological identification, or self-identification.

We use the term 'ethnicity' then to focus on the external perception of an individual or a group by another or others, while the notion of 'identity' carries an additional internal, psycho-social dimension including one's own self-perception.

Parameters of Ethnicity and Identity¹

The issue of ethnicity and identity may be considered from several angles.

First of all, there are **innate**, genetically-transmitted components of our identity (i.e. our DNA) **and acquired** constituent elements such as our languages, cultures, skills, education. The innate and the acquired are so

¹ Many of the ideas presented in this section have been inspired by the reflection of Amin Maalouf, a prize-winning Lebanese French-language author living in Paris, particularly in his work *Identités meurtrières* (Paris, LGF, Edition de poche, 2001), p.189.

intricately related to one another that it is often difficult to distinguish them.

Secondly, the respective importance of the various components of our identity may be **asynchronous** or **asymmetric**, that is, of varying dimensions in time and space. A Bosnian Muslim living in Tito's Yugoslavia would likely consider himself first Yugoslavian, secondly Bosnian, third Muslim. However, the post-Tito era brutally reversed these orders. Another example of this would be that of black African-Americans, the majority of whom are 'coloured' according to the definition of apartheid South Africa, as compared to the situation of an African-American living and working in Lagos (cf. Alex Haley's book *Roots*). We could also compare the ethnic/identity situation of the Kurds living in Iraq today with those living in Turkey.

A third way of considering ethnicity and identity, very prevalent in our times, is that of '**reductionist**' identity. In order to simplify complex realities, humans often tend toward reductionist assumptions relative to one's identity, whether it be religious, national, racial, sexual or other. This tendency almost always leads people to marginalise and exclude one another. During my 25 years in France, people often asked me, 'Do you feel more French or American?' It was clear that, for some, the answer should be 'French of course'. Such a question often proceeds from an unconscious belief that a person of multiple identities/ethnicities must choose one identity and exclude the others or at least give preponderance to one over the others. When held in an unconscious fashion, such a principle can lead to violence.

Fourthly, when our identities become reductionist and exclusive of one another, they can become 'murderous identities', to use Amin Maalouf's expression.² In this case, the identities we carry within ourselves violently confront each other. Indeed, the language of the proponents of ethnic cleansing is: 'No, you have to choose', whether it refers to language, nationality, race or religion. Ethnicity turns into ethnocentricity and often leads to violence, in its various forms.

Some would say, 'No, you cannot be an Arab and a Christian' or 'you cannot be a Jew and a Christian'. Others would affirm, 'You cannot affirm your Kurdish identity, Armenian or Christian identity and still be a Turk or an Iraqi – you have to choose'. Still others claim that, 'You cannot be an Algerian and affirm your Berber identity'. Of course, those who make these affirmations are ready to make the 'correct identity choice' for

² Ibid., Amin Maalouf.

their compatriots or co-religionaries ... they already possess the right answer which they often intend to impose. Menaces to one of our identities, or even to our existence as a group, tend to affirm and link our particularities, often overemphasising them according to the law of the pendulum – extremes often bring equal and opposite extreme reactions. Though murderous identities attempt to reduce our ethnicity/identity to only one exclusive element, we must affirm that this is impossible in today's global world.

Fifthly, there is a **socio-historic** dimension to our identities: our interpretation of our own personal group or national history can have a dramatic influence on our self-perception. In Lebanon, for historical and socio-religious reasons (notably the 'confessional' structure of the country), national identity arrives, at best, a distant second place in the loyalties of the citizens of the Land of the Cedars, well behind their sense of socio-religious and linguistic belonging. Some Lebanese Christians will deny that they are 'Arab' (the latter term in their minds being synonymous with 'Muslim'), preferring to claim that they are 'Phoenicians'. It seems that the Lebanese identity and sense of national belonging of the various Lebanese socio-politico-religious sub-strata comes to the forefront in face of common enemies, such as has been the case in recent conflicts with Israel and Syria. During the months of the eviction of the Syrian occupation forces in 2005, the manufacturers of Lebanese flags did record business, alongside those (probably the same ones...) who produced the flags of the Lebanese favourites in the 2006 World Cup!

2. A Brief Reminder of Biblical and Theological Parameters

After this general consideration of parameters related to ethnicity and identity, we turn our attention to factors that should concern us as Baptists living and doing ministry in Europe and the Middle East.

What should we think as Christians of these hard 'identity-ethnic' realities that we observe day after day in the news, all across our world? And how do these realities relate to our spirituality in our regions? The following general thoughts will hopefully stimulate our interaction and thinking in our various contexts.

1. The doctrine of **Creation** teaches us that our true identity relates to our uniqueness as a human being, with our unique fingerprint, our inimitable DNA ... no other human being has ever been or ever will be

exactly like us (Psa.139). Thus, a follower of Christ can affirm everything that God has allowed him or her to be in the sovereign, un-chosen foundations of his or her life.

2. The doctrine of **Salvation** teaches us that our first and foremost identity is our spiritual identity.³ However, this spiritual identity is not 'reductionist', that is, it should not deny the human constituent elements of our lives, but it is rather integrative – it constitutes the locus or nucleus which gives meaning to our innate and acquired characteristics, all of which become potential bridges to reach out to others, allowing us to 'become all things to all people'.⁴ We should conceive of our identity and ethnicity as the sum of our diverse belongings which are also of 'variable geometry' in time and space.
3. The doctrine of **Sanctification** teaches us that our identities are constructed and transformed over time through conversion and sanctification⁵ and become links or interfaces to people (note the emphasis: 'I become all things to all people'). Every component of our complex identities links us to many people while identity reductionism marginalises us and separates us from others. Thus, an Arab non-Christian who has come to Christ can learn to preserve his relationships with his community of origin in order to allow this transformation to be visible before the eyes of family, friends and colleagues. The challenge is to find appropriate forms of church and contact with believers of Christian background to allow the Body of Christ to be diverse yet united.
4. The doctrine of Eternal Life or **Glorification** helps us to situate our spiritual priorities in light of our final destination. Just as the nostalgia of 'return' often grows with age, so tends to grow our affection and desire to arrive in our heavenly country (Heb. 11). The priority and the eternity of that country bind us together in our diverse identities, and our status as 'Third Culture Christians' should put our long-term priorities into perspective. As 'aliens and exiles', 'resident aliens'⁶ on this earth, 'in the world system, but belonging to the world system', the fundamental component of our identity is heavenly, but that element should integrate, not marginalise our other identities. A non-Christian background believer in the Arab world should understand his or her past

³ Colossians 3 :1ff.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 9 :22.

⁵ Romans 12:1-2 (*metamorphosis*); 2 Corinthians.3 and 4, 5.17.

⁶ Hebrews 11 : 13-16.

culture and experiences ‘before Christ’ as bridges to be built and crossed with their birth community, not to be burned.

5. We are all called to be ‘world Christians’ – Pentecost, not Babel, is our goal. One of the greatest gifts we can leave with our students in our various institutions is to help them come to a greater understanding of the global dimension of our faith, taking our particular identities and integrating them together into one composite.

3. Middle Eastern Ethnicity/Identity and Spirituality

I would now like to briefly discuss eight specific challenges that we experience in our Middle Eastern and North African regions relative to ethnicity/identity and spirituality.

Imported Theology

The evangelical movements in our region, including our Baptist churches, were founded, for the most part, by Anglo-Saxon missionary societies, while the traditional eastern Catholic and Orthodox churches were heavily influenced by French-speaking mission societies from those Churches. Evangelical thought in our region has, therefore, tended to be based on paradigms imported from the West, and thus may or may not speak to the issues of our region. Thus our Bible colleges and seminaries have tended to teach subjects like systematic theology as if we were living in Europe or North America.

Yet, we have a desperate need to grapple in our region with a Trinitarian theology, with a Christology, with the Old Testament and its relationship to Israel, with a doctrine of the inspiration of scripture that effectively engages with Islam while preserving evangelical faithfulness. We do not need to discuss five proofs for the existence of God – his existence is a given in our region.

The way forward here is to prepare local faculty and leadership who are culturally, linguistically, spiritually and academically capable of producing resources speaking to the needs of our region. We are very thankful for IBTS’ role and the role of others such as Langham Partnership, Overseas Council International and ReSource Leadership International in this area. As a result, one of our faculty, Martin Accad, obtained his PhD at Oxford and is preparing a book on how Muslims understand and use the Gospels; yet another, Hikmat Kachouh, an IBTS graduate, is doing ground-breaking research at the University of Birmingham (UK) on ancient Arabic manuscripts of the NT, collecting and classifying them into manuscript

families, helping us to see how Arab Christians have understood the scriptures over the centuries; a third faculty member, Nizar Masri, is also an IBTS graduate and is developing a theology and practice of mission aiming to reach non-Christian Arabs without extracting them from their communities and burning their bridges behind them. Our latest faculty scholar, Elie Haddad, has a passion to help our Baptist churches in the Middle East become missional communities, reaching out to the workplace and beyond to touch the lives of people from our region.

Clan-Based Leadership Patterns

Our Australian educationalist colleague in Beirut, Dr Perry Shaw, has developed a lecture called ‘Tribal chieftains and Servant Leaders’, in which he identifies basic issues which bring misunderstanding and hinder collaboration between Westerners and Middle Easterners working in our region. Our emphasis in the West on ‘servant leadership’ is definitely highly counter-cultural in our region – we can quickly see this as new people arrive in our seminary. Pastors and ministry leaders often feel threatened and become highly protective of their position of prestige and influence as ‘clan chief’, rather than focusing on the empowerment of younger leaders in their circle of influence. Since even our denominations are composed of extended families, we often have a built-in rivalry between the denominations based on sociological, as well as doctrinal considerations. But I suspect that the sociology is more fundamental, though less conscious, than the doctrinal divisions. Three of our schools in Beirut (the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, the Christian Alliance Institute of Theology and the Mediterranean Bible College) are attempting to counteract these tendencies by developing a consortium of shared professors and courses through which our students, faculties and administrations get to know one another as friends and build bridges for future cooperation.

Ingrown Churches

Because of long-standing persecution of Christians in our region and because of opposition from the traditional Eastern Christian churches, our evangelical churches have often become ingrown, *de facto* separatists. We teach our people to separate themselves from non-believers, and yet we exhort them to be witnesses. Is there something wrong with this picture? Because of their ingrown nature, these communities also can become unconscious systems of control, where legalism and outward behaviour and appearance become more important than being a ‘church where grace is in place’. Our seminaries and Bible colleges in the Middle East and North

Africa need to be catalysts for change to develop missional churches by training missional pastors and lay leaders who bear witness in the workplace, in the student world, wherever they are.

Unity between Christian and non-Christian Background Believers

An issue, not unlike the tensions existing between Christians of Jewish and Gentile origin in the 1st century, is that of the relationship between believers originating from a Christian background and those who have come to Christ from a non-Christian background. Without trying to oversimplify this complex issue, non-Christian background believers are often faced with the choice of adopting evangelical and Christian culture, and burn their bridges with their families and community, or refuse to do so and become very isolated. The challenge is to train non-Christian background believers to develop their own unique spirituality and traditions, from their own reading of scripture, while preserving the essentials of the Christian faith, as well as to encourage fellowship between these two groups of believers in our region.

Emigration and Leadership Development

Lebanon prepares its people for emigration. They grow up learning three languages, live in a multicultural confessional mosaic, are a bridge culture between east and west, between Europe and the Arab world. Thus, world travellers since the days of their Phoenician ancestors, the Lebanese export themselves ... and we lose them. One of the greatest challenges to us is that of keeping our young people, providing them with employment, keeping them encouraged in the midst of an unstable regional environment, in the midst of menaces and discrimination against them. One of the major reasons Lebanese and Middle Eastern Christian young people leave, encouraged by their parents, is because they are persuaded that they have no future, that they need to get a second passport to be able to travel, etc. Helping them have a spiritual vision of what God can do through them if they stay is a major challenge to us, and youth ministry takes on an even greater dimension in our region.

The Influence of Middle Eastern Educational Tradition

The influence of Islam on Middle Eastern education is pervasive. Authoritarian teaching and rote learning are the rule, even in some universities. In Islamic tradition, the Coran is to be memorised, obeyed, but not necessarily understood. One of the clear objectives of our teaching at ABTS has to be teaching students to learn, to explore, to interact and to

verify, beginning with their understanding and application of the scriptures to their lives. The purpose of our seminary is not primarily to teach students what to believe (we hope that they already know this when they come to us), but how to think.

The Consequences of Unstable Regional Environment and its Parade of Suffering

Our little country of four million people (and 500,000 Palestinians) lost hundreds of thousands of its citizens to war and to emigration during the 15-year Lebanese (so-called) civil war. Our seminary main building was hit seventeen times by rockets and mortars during that war. The father of one of our female staff members was kidnapped 20 years ago and never seen again. Another staff member's father was shot in the back and killed ... on the last day of the war. Very few resources have been available to manage such terrible suffering and grief and so people put these things in the closet, they are definitely there but not spoken about.

Some of our non-Christian background students (about 20% of our 230 graduates) have lost their families, their professions and their countries because of their faith in Christ. One of these was assassinated in 2004 at the instigation of his own immediate family.

Our country was occupied by the Israeli army for 18 years and by the Syrian army and intelligence for over 30 years. In these, and the above circumstances, stability is a relative term! We have frequently had to adjust in our recent past to an unstable environment, as manifested in such things as abrupt refusal of visas to our students, surveillance of our e-mails and telephone communication, and even the theft of our computers.

Our training must not neglect a theology of suffering and the cost of discipleship in our region. And yet we have the great privilege of being ambassadors of reconciliation to our peoples. We are, as evangelicals, reaching out to the poorest of the poor. We are now strategically positioned to influence university students from all across the region. We have had so many blessings and encouragements, in the midst of all the challenges.

Helping and Encouraging a 1st Century Church

One of our great privileges and challenges is to assist emerging non-Christian background churches all over our region. We are reflecting on finding ways to help the new, non-denominational churches in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and the Gulf avoid the pitfalls described above relative to the more traditional Middle Eastern churches. Our seminary has alumni in

most of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa regions. We want to be their strategic partners and yet be driven by their agenda.

Conclusion

We often say of our region: 'Never a dull moment!' We have never before had such great challenges and great opportunities for bearing holistic witness to our Lord Jesus Christ!

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Theological Education in a Context where the Church Lost its Body

According to the famous World Value Survey initiated by Professor Ronald Inglehart, Scandinavia is the area in the world with the most developed post-materialistic values. That is, the countries of Scandinavia score highest in the world regarding both 'secular-rational values' and, what they call, 'self-expression values' which emphasises subjective well-being; and top-of-the-class is Sweden.¹ Thus, the challenge for Theological Educators in Scandinavia is to be pioneers in conducting spiritual formation in a secular and individualistic culture.

The Church in a post-materialistic Culture

The secular and individualistic culture in Scandinavia has generated a church that lost its body. With the metaphor 'body' I emphasise (a) that the Christian life concerns the whole of life, not just a spiritual dimension, and (b) that Christianity concerns life together in the Community of God where different members share their life with each other in one body. Of course, the baptist (with small 'b', as James McClendon used to say²) and free-church tradition has a mixed relationship with the modern world. Individualism and secularism are partly the result of the Free Church struggle with State Churches. It is a good thing that the Church is now separated from the power of the State and that church membership depends on personal conviction and not decisions made by the king or parliament (this fully happened in Sweden in 2000; in Denmark – this very secularised country – there is still a State Church).

The problem, however, is that these developments created a split that threatens the baptist vision of a congregation that is an embodiment of the future kingdom in this present world. Instead of a conflict between the Kingdom of God and the present order, secularism divided the one world into two different departments. The State was made King over economics, social institutions, politics and science. Jesus was reduced to be a King of another, religious and spiritual sphere, mostly understood as a private and inner realm. This is well known, and we know the effect. The relationship between Church and State/Society was no longer seen as a conflict between

¹ The World Values Survey (WVS) is a series of intercultural studies on the basis of interviews with representative population samples from some 60 countries conducted in four major waves 1981-84, 1990-1993, 1995-1997 and 1999-2000. For information and material, see www.worldvaluessurvey.com.

² James Wm McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Ethics. Volume One, 2nd ed., rev. and enl.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), p.19.

two economies, two sociologies or two types of political arrangement but as a peaceful division between two areas where a huge part of the world belonged to the realm of the State.

A church that is something other than economics, sociology or politics is a fellowship of people who deal with spiritual matters. ‘Spiritual’ becomes something different from the bodily things which the State takes care of and so the Church has little to say about life in the body and about the concrete relationships that we have with each other in society. This is the first major problem for theology in our context. In a secular culture, theology is no longer understood as a holistic interpretation of life. Most parts of life are constructed within a secular, not Christian, frame of mind.³

The second aspect of the post-materialistic values which Ingelhard emphasises is subjective well-being and self-expression. The individual understands his or her life as a task for which he or she must take full responsibility. The person is no longer primarily part of a collective (the nation, a family or a social group); nor will he or she submit to absolute truth, a moral code or external authorities. The individual must choose his or her own destiny to gain maximum satisfaction, meaning and well-being.

This implies a very fragmented world where people are caught up in hectic movements between different locations. You live in one place, often as a small nuclear family, or even as a single person, and from that place you go to different locations for work and study. And when the evening or weekend comes you go to other places for various spare-time activities. For most Scandinavian families it is a struggle to have even one common meal together as a family. In this fragmented life, where all run between home, work and spare-times activities, it is impossible to have a holistic understanding of life. There is only one thing that is constant in all these locations where you meet different people, are supposed to play different roles and do different things – and that is yourself. So instead of understanding life from a religious or ideological point of view, you must see life from a personal perspective. It becomes a personal task to make

³ Ever since the publication of John Milbank’s book, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), I have been challenged by what later became called ‘the Radical Orthodoxy’ and the critique of secular reason. See my article ‘Redemption without Actuality: A Critical Interrelation between Eberhard Jüngel’s and John Milbank’s Ontological Endeavours’, *Modern Theology*, 14:4, 1998, pp. 505-522. However, I suspect a tendency toward a new Christendom – a baptist theology must always be done from the margins. Compare my critical discussion of Nancey Murphy’s project in ‘Is Ethics Also Among the Sciences? An Evaluation of Nancey Murphy and George Ellis’s Theological Proposals’, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 19:1, 2001, pp. 25-37.

something important and beautiful of one's own individual life.⁴ That's all you can aim for in a post-materialistic culture. However, individualism is not a claim that we are more egoistic today. The emphasis on individuality is intimately tied to the notion of individual rights and liberties. This implies respect and tolerance for other individuals and a wish that every person shall have the same opportunity for a good life as you have yourself. Our big problem is not egoism but, rather, our failure to construct a common life in Christ.

A fragmented life is the second major problem for Theology of the Church. In the hectic life of a normal Scandinavian family there is simply no time left and no strength for a life in common. Most churches thus accept that we must lose our body; that is our baptist identity as a communion in one body. Instead many Churches choose two different alternatives:

1. **The retreat:** The task of the Church is to offer religious rites and practices that help people to manage their lives. One weekend of retreat, ten minutes of meditation, therapeutic gatherings or an evening mass in the Church, offer a step back from the world in order to have the strength to continue normal life both in private and in public. That is the traditional Christendom. The Church is seen as something you attend once in a while when you make a retreat from normal life with the purpose of enriching normal life.
2. **Spare-time activities.** Those that try to find a place for the Church in a post-materialistic culture have to conclude that, since the Church is not a home or a working-place, it must be located in the spare-time section as a kind of 'club' to go to when we are free from work and family. We go there once or twice a week to experience activities for children and youth, to enjoy musical events or social fellowship or even to have great religious experiences. This is the worst sort of free-church life: a church that has been reduced to a spare-time club for those interested in religious activities.

⁴ Of course, such an individual perspective is as ideological as any religious interpretation ever was. The difference is that we usually do not acknowledge the ideological depth of the liberal culture that we are part of. For a critic of this liberal ideology, see especially the works of Stanley Hauerwas.

Why Theological Education has contributed to this Development

Theological Education has contributed to the development of a church without a body. Of course, this is a simplistic charge. Reality is much more complicated. Yet, in several ways, theological training and spiritual formation has been carried out in a manner that has reinforced rather than questioned a secular and individualistic culture.

1 *No resistance to individualism*

First, the obvious fact: theological institutions have only been educating individuals. It is the individual who chooses theological education, becomes enlightened in school and is given the mission to go back to 'reality' in order to change old local congregations. This limitation has several effects

- (a) The Church has lost the responsibility to educate its own leaders. Nowadays most churches look to institutions to train leaders, forgetting their own responsibility to make disciples.
- (b) The academy is part of an education system that easily creates a split between progressive individuals (and theologians) and traditional congregations. As educators noticed long ago, it takes extensive time and effort to develop a leader for a company if the company itself is not part of the leader's development. Either it leads to conflict in the company or the bright fellow will leave for a better job (or, most likely, both will happen). That is, if theological institutions do not encourage growth in congregations but just in individuals, they are wasting their time.
- (c) The reason that we can defend our strategy is that (perhaps against our own intentions) we reinforce the traditional division between ministers and lay people in our Baptist context. We strive to educate ministers that will become *the* important resource for renewal of the Church. In our perception it is the well-educated minister that has the mission to revive the congregation.

Secondly, our education focuses on training individual virtues. There are many good things in this. The Church needs creative and bright individuals. Yet, we fail to train the most important virtues, such as 'how to seek a common understanding of the will of God in a specific situation'. The important virtue in the Kingdom of God is not what I believe, but what *we* believe; not what my agenda is, but what *we* believe God wants our

congregation to do; and so forth. So our adoption of normal theological education means that we are losing some of the fundamental practices that have been central for the constructing and upholding of community in the Free-Church tradition.

2 No power of influence against secularisation

The academy has also adapted itself to a life in a secular and fragmented society. It has, firstly, separated the theological subjects from each other: systematic theology is not exegesis; ethics is not church history; practical theology is not exegesis. But most importantly, the modern paradigm for the university has also separated theology from all other subjects in the academy. Thus, systematic theology is not economics, sociology or political studies. But what happens to this subject when it is neither biblical studies nor dealing with social relations, sex, power and money? Sadly, it often becomes an intellectual presentation of the Christian doctrines, sometimes very intellectually exciting but hardly affecting anything in 'real life'.

In contrast to the secular paradigm, theology needs to regain the conviction that to speak of Christ as King is to speak of a divine power that is different from the powers of the world. Thus, we cannot speak about the nature of God and Christ without understanding politics differently and thus try to find new ways to make decisions in the community of God's people. To teach ecclesiology is to speak about a God that challenges us to embody another economy and sociology where money, power and sexual relations are constructed in a peaceful and righteous manner. As exegeses demonstrates: the very first Christian community had to make a redistribution of their possessions and create a new kind of joyful sharing of the fellowship around the table.⁵

Of course, there is one subject where theologians deal with politics, economies and social realities and that is ethics. But in this subject we all too often forget the biblical and systematic understanding of faith and, instead, use secular concepts such as tolerance, democracy and human

⁵ For some attempts of another interpretation of systematic theology, see John Milbank's proposal 'Theology as a Social Science', *ibid*, pp. 380-438, and Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) and exemplified in Volf's book *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). I have recently published an attempt to write a history of Moral Theology from the perspective of the practices which have been upholding the Christian vision in different periods of church history; see *Kristen moralhistoria: Sökan det efter det goda livet* (Örebro: Libris, 2006).

rights. This liberal culture has a lot of good things to teach us, but it cannot provide the important tools for a Christian interpretation of the world.

Thus, we have developed a theological education that fails to teach theological students the ability for a Christian reading of the whole of life. Our education is caught within a system that makes life fragmented. Theologians are left with a theological section dealing with spiritual dimensions (a retreat from real science) or technical knowledge concerning how to develop activities in 'spare-time' churches. One example of this is to reduce the subject 'Spiritual Formation' to the development of the inner life of individual leaders instead of seeking to construct the 'Life in Common' that God intends for those belonging to the Kingdom.

Some Suggestions for another Strategy

In the year 2000 we had the opportunity to start a new theological education in Malmö and Copenhagen in co-operation with Örebro Theological Seminary (situated in the centre of Sweden). Malmö, in the far south of Sweden, and Copenhagen were, that summer, connected to each other by a twenty-kilometre long bridge over the sea. This was the context for creating a new type of theological education: a new Scandinavian area full of confidence in the future and one of the most secular areas in the world.⁶

What resulted was the Scandinavian Academy of Leadership and Theology (SALT). It has since been enlarged with the inclusion of the Baptist Seminary of Oslo, Norway. I have been co-ordinator of this network of institutions since then. So this is the context for this article: how to create theological education in this context that can give spiritual training for leaders in the Scandinavian churches?

1. In SALT we have tried to develop a church-based education; that is, every student has two places of education (the academy and the local church) and two personal mentors, one in the academy and one in the church. That means that, in order to accept a student, we require that they are connected to a local church that accepts being a place for training and being part of that educational process. We are still struggling to develop many more tools in order to reach a maximum

⁶ There are signs that we are at the beginning of change. Recent studies among youth in Sweden signal a resacralisation in the younger generations. See the sociologist Magnus Hagevi's works (summarised in 'Sekulariseringens slut?', *Sociologisk forskning* 4:2005, pp. 35-42). If Hagevi is right, an adaption to secular reason is even more disastrous for theological training in the future.

interaction between academy and congregation (technical developments help us in this area).

2. Holistic spiritual training requires that the student doesn't just discuss and experience life within the church. We need students who serve people in all different situations in society. Theology must be a reflection of the congregations' mission in the world, especially to the least ones. What a tremendous effect it has on a course in systematic theology when there are students working with alcoholics, youth or immigrants. That helps the theological teacher to remember what the important questions are for those who want to believe in God in today's Scandinavia.
3. We need to develop a more integrated curriculum. The most difficult thing for a theological student is to put everything together in a new and more fruitful synthesis of faith and life. But in this task our schools often give them very little help. We give students pieces of information divided into different subjects and then ask them to put everything together by themselves in a new synthesis. We must change this! In SALT we have taken some small steps. We often use problem solving learning or, at least, teach with a reflection on the practices of Church Life and Mission. Secondly, we have a process of integration running throughout where the students must reflect on their developments as leaders and theologians. And we have begun a test in every semester where the students are examined on whether they can apply the knowledge they have acquired from different courses to one concrete problem.
4. Finally, we need to ask what are the common practices we need to uphold in our Theological Education if we want to have good spiritual formation? 'Practices' is a popular word made famous especially by Alasdair MacIntyre.⁷ And it is very useful since it reminds us that the most important formation of our life happens by those practices we have in common in order to reach those things we aim for within a specific community. I have been challenged by reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer over the years. In 1935 he was called by the Confessional Church to start one of their new institutions for Ministerial Training in Finkenwalde. In order to accept this position, he required that he be allowed to start a community in the midst of the training centre. In this experiment, which was allowed for two years before the Nazis closed the centre,

⁷ See MacIntyre's now classical definition of practices in *After Virtues: A Study of Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), p. 175.

Bonhoeffer created a context for theological education centred around the practices of a life in common. Among the common practices can be mentioned: (a) Confession to each other before celebration of the Lord's Supper, (b) daily prayer, (c) service to church and society, (d) meditations in private and in fellowship, (e) never speaking of a brother not present in the fellowship and (f) celebrations around the meal, the piano or just playing ('a Lutheran monastery').⁸ I'm not sure that these are the most important practices we need to uphold, and probably our challenges are not the same all over Europe. But all institutions should ask themselves which practices they need to uphold in their spiritual formation. In Scandinavia our challenge is primarily to create a context where we develop practices that counter our tendency to interpret even Christianity in a secular and individualistic manner; that is, practices that help us to create a life together in one body.

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⁸ For a vivid description of this period in Bonhoeffer's life, see Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 314-491, and Bonhoeffer's own reflections in *Life Together* (*Works: Vol. V*, Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

Spirituality and Ethnicity in Holland

Theological education nowadays is faced with a major change and challenge in going and rowing against the tide to prepare students to serve God in a pluralistic society. Serving God in a postmodern and globalising era means to teach them, in God's name, to cross cultural borders and show respect for every kind of person. More than ever, Christian professionals should be trained to communicate with people from all over the world because the world has never been so small. Building bridges was Christ's ministry and calling, but 21st century Christianity in Western Europe is in dire need of the same Spirit of Christ. According to the well-known Spanish sociologist, Manuel Castells, society is falling apart. 'The dissolution of shared identities, which is tantamount to the dissolution of society as a meaningful social system, may well be the state of affairs in our time. Nothing says that new identities have to emerge'.¹ Especially traditional collective identities are gradually vaporising or – more importantly – they are being reprogrammed (call it 'tribalised') into temporary networks as well. The fabric of Western European social structures is melting down in the fire of the information technology revolution. The IT age brought about a paradigm shift of uncomparable magnitude, which basically resulted in the breaking up of society in floods of liquid tribal networks.

I guess the story of the struggle of 21st century Holland with the integration of strangers, be they immigrants or refugees or native coloured people, is well known. Holland has, for many centuries, been a safe haven to many sorts and kinds of fleeing groups or individuals. Terrorist attacks last year in London and Madrid and – in particular the brutal assassinations of the politician, Pim Fortuyn, in 2002 and the film director, Theo van Gogh, in 2004, provoked much fear and confusion in the low countries and made many Dutch turn suspicious and allergic to uncultured ethnic minorities.² I think the outcome of an inquiry held in May this year among 1000 Dutch is shocking. No less than 25% had negative thoughts about resident migrants – 10% (100 out of 1000) even declared a sympathy with racist points of view. For example, they believe the white race to be more intelligent than black people, and wish that foreigners who live in Holland but were not born there, could easily be discharged from their work, if

¹ M Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. 2: *The Power of Identity* (Massachusetts, 1997) p. 355.

² Cf. Claire Berlinski, *Menace in Europe. Why the Continent's Crisis is America's Too* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2006).

necessary. Recently, the Somalian liberal politician, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who had resided for fourteen years in the Netherlands, came close to being expelled because recent evidence showed that she had lied in 1992 – when she entered Holland and requested asylum – about her real name, birthdate and home-country. Rita Verdonk, secretary of migration and integration, and a member of the same political party Hirsi Ali represented, was determined to stick to the letter of the law and dispel her own colleague. In the end, Parliament ordered Verdonk to do her utmost to grant Hirsi Ali a licence of Dutch nationality. Hirsi Ali, a friend of Theo van Gogh, became instrumental in the needed national debate about Islam. She was threatened and harassed by extreme Muslims for years. This courageous lady was now gagged, I believe, for being critical and giving too much attention to the alarming facts of failing integration. Yes, the projected integration in Holland of the last twenty years has failed. Building mental and verbal and cultural bridges for ethnic minorities is hard.

The Church of Jesus Christ is challenged to obey the great missionary commission and to build meaningful bridges for communication of the Gospel without losing its historic spiritual identity in fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is what Christianity is all about, and especially the beyond-itself-pointing-to-God quality of this fellowship is a warrant for possibly becoming a healing community. Christian fellowship *qualitate qua* is healing fellowship in a world full of broken relations and broken dreams – a world bleeding from a thousand wounds. Too many people are lonely and hurt. Christian students unfortunately do not make an exception. Bible schools and theological seminaries should be aware of the healing spiritual power of their fellowship with the Triune God. This conviction I would like to explain in this short remark.

Man was made according to the image of God. We all know that. God's own image is reflected in man. God said 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' (KJV, Gen. 1:26). And so he did. He created man in his image. The Bible continues: 'in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them' (KJV, Gen. 1:27). Now I will not go into the exegetical details of these verses, but one observation is for sure: the reflection of God's image concerns man's plurality.³ Man is more than one, because God is more than one (of course Genesis 1 cannot be explained as referring to an early trace of the Trinity). God expresses himself as a 'we', so man, made after his likeness, is also introduced as a 'we'. The Jewish and Christian God reveals himself as a complete expression of being and

³ The interpretation of these verses is complex, cf. Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1; Waco: Word Books, 1987) p. 27-34.

brightness and goodness. So a human being reflects that too. He or she is not a flat character. Human beings are complex forms of life, full of creativity and potentiality. I think this explains the similitude of God and man – man's fullness, his multiplicity, enables him 'to fulfil' and this capacity precisely defines God's blessing on his life. God finishes his creative work by saying: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth' (Gen. 1:28). Adam and Eve should fill up the earth by their multifarious offspring, boys and girls, large and small, black and white, red and yellow. The variety of humanity is everything God wanted his timely manifested image to be, because only abundance of life could mean a fair resemblance of his divine essence.

So all of mankind – all human races, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, male and female – refer to the holy personal essence of God. No-one is allowed to curse his fellow-man, says James, the brother of the Lord, because he is 'made after the similitude of God' (James 3:9). Every human being is to be honoured and venerated. Man is a mystery, costly designed and marked by divine reciprocity. I think man's greatness is actually expressed in these last words. Human reciprocity is a unique gift from God and cannot be compared to any other form of life on earth.

From this line of reasoning the assertion follows that God's eternal reciprocity is the sole mode and model for human relations.⁴ At least, that is how it should be. Now let us first consider God's eternal relations and then make some applications for 21st century spiritual theology in European theological education.

Soon after New Testament times the early Christian church distinguished itself as a new brand of belief. Of course, initially Christianity was rooted in Jewish religion, but after only a few decades the Roman oppressors of the Middle East knew how to discriminate between formative Judaism and the Christian alternative. From the start, Jewish Christianity, regrettably, was doomed to fail. The Old Testament was recognised and annexed as a Christian book – especially as a gentile Christian book. The 2nd century AD stands out for the 'battle for the Bible', I mean for authentic Jewish scripture. Christians like Justin Martyr tried to prove that Old Testament scripture in essence was Christian. Heretics like Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament as a product of a lower God – a

⁴ Cf. Stanley J Grenz, *Theology For the Community of God* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1994) pp. 68-127. See also Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace. A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), Idem, *Trinität und Gemeinschaft. Eine ökumenische Ekklesiologie* (Mainz/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Grünwald-Neukirchener, 1996); translation into English: *After Our Likeness. The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), Idem, *A Spacious Heart. Essays on Identity and Belonging* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997).

Creator, a Jewish Zeus – broke Christianity off from its Jewish roots. The Carthaginian Christian and teacher Tertullian vehemently fought Marcionitism, because for him Christianity could not do without Old Testament history. Church and creation belong together. God the Creator is God the Redeemer. For Tertullian salvation is not just a mythical concept of upper-world knowledge. Salvation in Jesus Christ is effectual at this side of reality, in simple human life, in sobriety and society. To be saved means to be taken up in salvation history. Christianity is a phenomenon of inner history. Heresy explores and exploits ‘outer history’. For Tertullian, pondering on the concept of the Trinity was not merely a mental exercise – it had everything to do with history as he saw it. In fact he probably wrote his famous treatise about trinitarianism *Adversus Praxeum* (Praxeas was a profound monarchian modalist) in 210/211 AD, just after a time of persecution in certain districts of Egypt had broken out.⁵ In fact the very year after, Tertullian wrote an apology to the chief magistrate of Carthage, Scapula, requesting him not to shed innocent Christian blood.⁶ Reflection on the Trinity in early Christianity was not just theory – it was practising experiential theology.

As a matter of course, Tertullian had to solve the paradox of the ‘one’ and the ‘many’ in the Godhead, Israel’s confession of *adonai echad* (Deut. 6:4) versus the Church’s explicit notion of Father, Son and Spirit. Around 177 AD, in his *Supplicatio*, the mysterious Christian author, Athenagoras, made a comment about people who

reckon the present life of very small worth indeed, and who are conducted to the future life by this one thing alone, that they know God and His Logos, what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, what the communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these three, the Spirit, the Son, the Father, and their distinction in unity (12, cf. 10).⁷

Here Athenagoras gives a short and important description of early Christian spirituality. Christians were concerned with knowing God, the oneness and communion of Father and Son, the unity of Father and Son and Spirit and ‘their distinction in unity’. The public plea of Athenagoras emphasises the importance of early trinitarian thinking in the late second

⁵ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6,1-5. See Henk Bakker, ‘Potamiaena: Some Observations About Martyrdom and Gender in Ancient Alexandria’, in Anthony Hilhorst, George H van Kooten (eds.), *The Wisdom of Egypt. Jewish, Early Christian and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard. Luttikhuisen* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 59; Leiden: Brill, 2005) pp. 331-350.

⁶ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 1-5.

⁷ Cf. W R Schoedel, *Athenagoras. Legatio and De Resurrectione* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford, 1972).

century. Tertullian developed early and naïve trinitarian thinking along more systematised ways and tried to express and explain the inexplicable. In his tractate against Praxeas, the North-African church father makes effort to render himself ‘not guilty’ of the accusation of proclaiming three Gods (*Adversus Praxean* 3,1).⁸

According to Tertullian the holy Son of God – the eternal *logos* – generates from the substance of the Father (4,1 *de substantia Patris*). The Spirit springs from the Father through the Son (4,1 *a Pater per Filium*). In fact Tertullian is saying: God was never alone! Let us for a moment listen to some famous Tertullian words: ‘For before all things God was alone (...) Yet even not then was He alone’ (*Ante omnia enim Deus erat solus ... Ceterum ne tunc quidem solus* 5,2). God is ‘one’, but he is not alone. Son and Spirit are not to be equated with gnostic emanations. No, they were and are even now eternally coming forth from the Father (the source) and receive authentic and distinctive personality in this ontological process of continuous becoming. The Christian God is three in one, which qualifies Christianity as the only monotheist religion that holds on to three coequal persons in the one-Godhead, who are altogether not as equal as we may think. They differ substantially as far as their positions and employments are concerned.

By definition, the enigma – or paradox – of the Trinity has never been solved. How can three be one? How can one be three? Relying on mathematical precision the dogma of the Trinity seems to be a monstrosity. But still, the concept of the oneness of God in Israelite religion does not preclude the possibility of the ‘many’. Jewish texts and traditions recognise multiplicity in God.⁹ In eastern Christian tradition the incomprehensibility of trinitarian theology was made credible and acceptable by redefining God’s eternal relation in terms of *perichoresis* (‘interpenetration’ meaning coentrance and interdependence; John of Damascus, 7th/8th century).¹⁰ Father, Son and Spirit coexist and yet all three are God and interpenetrate one another. They are like three burning torches which kindle one another, yet the source of the fire undisputably is the Father. One of the main characteristics of eastern orthodoxy is to reason from threesome to

⁸ Cf. H-J Sieben, *Tertullian, Adversus Praxean: Gegen Praxeas* (Fontes Christiani 34; Freiburg: Herder, 2001).

⁹ Aubrey R Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961); Rabbi Tzvi Nassi (Hirsch Prinz), *The Great Mystery. Or, How Can Three be One?* (Jerusalem: Yanetz, 1974²).

¹⁰ Cf. G W H Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976⁴) 1078, and references in Denzinger-Schönmetzer (D-S), *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Barcinone-Friburgi Brisgoviae-Romae: Herder, 1976³⁶) at B 2cc (p. 863).

oneness.¹¹ Because Father, Son and Spirit, all three, manifestly operate in salvation history, they are God, and because they are God, they should be one. Yes, God's unity is being presumed, for no human being is ever capable of understanding who and how God really is. The picture of God as he is revealed resembles the intimacy and diversity of a family. Western tradition takes a different stand. Augustin speculates about God's eternal *aseitas* and uses his notions about the unity of God for his theory of perichoretic reciprocity. For Augustin unity comes before diversity.¹²

Notice carefully the difference between the eastern and the western spiritual mindset. Eastern theologians *grosso modo* take perichoresis to be, in the first place, active reciprocal interpenetration of the Godhead. The eternal God, above all is motion, and the distinct motions of Father, Son and Spirit together, constitute the bond and unity between the three. Eastern theological thinking moves from motion to rest and tranquility. Western theology (again in general) moves from tranquility to action, from the calm to the motion.¹³ Western theological thinking is inclined to start with describing the eternal and unifying perichoretic bond of Father, Son and Spirit and lets the holy Trinity come to interaction and the work of salvation from there.

Consequently, we, as western Christians, are apt to care for spiritual conformity, uniformity and sameness at the cost of difference and (let's say) 'other'ness. Western Christianity suffers from chronic inertia, neatness and correctness. We delight in political correctness, mental straightness and spiritual focus; intellectual uniformity, like our inclination to structure, agenda, results, rationality and intellectual growth. We connect to each another but lack any time and energy and mentality to really explore one another. Western ideology, in fact, is static and capitulates for the dogma of individualism, like Descartes discovered. No-one is able to fully grasp and feel the mind of somebody else. Every individual is a lone soul, thrown into the universe, doomed to stay alone forever. Western souls tend to pull apart because they stay together pretending to be one and cunningly use and exploit each other. In the West the individual makes society, in the East society makes the individual. Anyhow and anywhere, Christians should make a difference.

¹¹ Cf. Irenaeus, *AH* 3,6,2, Origen, Dionysius of Rome (D-S 115), Athanasius, *De decretis nicaenae synodis* 26, Hilary, *De Trinitate* 3,4; 4,40; 7,31-32; the great Cappadocian theologians (Gregory of Nazianzus is the first theologian who uses perichoresis in the discussion about the natures of Christ, *Ep.* 101,6) and John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 1,8; 3,5 (he is the first to apply the concept of perichoresis to the discussion of the Trinity); Fulgentius of Ruspe, *De fide ad Petram seu de regula fidei* 1,4; cf. D-S 1331, NR 28.

¹² Cf. *De trinitate* about interpenetration (Lat. *circumitio, ingressio, circumisessio*), 9,5; cf. 6,10.

¹³ Cf. Walter Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1982) pp. 337-347.

The doctrine of perichoresis, though full of speculations, proved to be essential for Christian self understanding in the West and the East. Two thousand years of Christianity offered Christians and non-Christians alike a model of heavenly community to reflect on and to copy. The Christian family and society was to be a reflection of the eternal order of God. Looking at the heavens – the sun, the moon and the stars, the order of God, the reflection of the quiet motion of God himself in creation – mankind was able to realise the necessity of a hierarchy of life.¹⁴ Life is stratified, life has many layers. Human life itself is very complex. For example friendship, matrimony, society, church life, family life, all are aspects of life which we deeply appreciate. The warmth or coldness, love or pain, beauty or damage they bring, reach the most inner layers of the human heart. Disintegrating powers of evil are a sad fact of life, but more sad is the fact that they gain power and success. Can we learn to live life and receive healing by looking at the eternal order of God? I think, we can and we should.

The speculative category of perichoresis helps us to be able to focus new attention on the paradox of ‘togetherness’. Every man or woman is an individual who lives and dies for himself. No-one can die the death of somebody else – likewise nobody can live the life of his friend or child. As individuals we are separate entities and identities, I mean: separate persons with individual substance of a rational nature.¹⁵ Still, this is certainly not enough. Human beings need to get involved in the lives of other people. Everybody is desperately hungry for words, gestures, touches, caresses, the lovely faces of friends and family. As individuals we are on our own – this is my own life – but we do not wish to be lonesome. Human beings, by nature, are eccentric. They have to focus on other humans in order to be conscious of themselves. This phenomenon I call the fundamental ‘openness of man’ and it is essential for man’s self-concept (cf. ‘Weltoffenheit’).¹⁶ Basically, he is open to touch the world and to being touched. The more he trusts his environment, the more his mental horizon is growing and widening. Together with others he feels at home with himself, but also experiences the fear and pressure of possible estrangement. The dilemma of fear of alienation from oneself or from others seems an unsolvable paradox. How can I be able to really give myself to others without losing myself?

¹⁴ Cf. Max Wildiers, *Kosmologie in de westerse cultuur. Historisch-kritisch essay* (Kapellen-Kampen: Pelckmans-Kok Agora, 1988).

¹⁵ Cf. Boethius (6th century): *persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia* (*Liber de persona et duabus naturis* 3).

¹⁶ See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

The example of Jesus concerning the riddle is significant. Jesus said: 'I and the Father are one' (Joh. 10:30, *ego kai ho pater hen esmen*). Father and Son are different persons and yet they receive one another completely; the one in the other, God in God, while both remaining themselves. They go into each other, yet they do not disappear! The enigma reminds us of the confession of Chalcedon about Jesus. As the minutes of the Council state, both natures of Jesus are 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation' (*asunchutos, atreptos, adiairetos, achoristos*). The formulation as it stands emphasises the *via negativa* – it states what Jesus is not. It does not explain how the human and divine natures of Jesus cooperate. As is so often the case with Christian confessions, human words are just not enough to explicate the 'depths of God' (1 Cor. 2:10). Our verbal impotence should lead us to worship.

Anyhow, perichoretic reciprocity between Father and Son offers a careful model which also may turn out to be fruitful in other areas of theological interest. Jesus promised that he would dwell in his Church, in his followers, in every single Christian on this earth. In John 14:20,23 and 17:21-23a scripture says

In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you ... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him – [I do ask] that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us ... And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.'

These verses clearly not only teach the eternal reciprocity as an example or model to be followed by us. God's unity and diversity offers a rule, yes a standard, to be obeyed!

Unity and diversity between Christians, between parents and children, between wife and husband, between the rich and the poor, between friends, between black and white people, between all races and ethnic groups, should be interpreted according to God's standard. Perichoresis offers a divinely superimposed and, therefore, coercive paradigm of openness, surrender and unity – yes of real love – without giving up one's own freedom and *proprium* (the 'self' with idiosyncrasy). According to this 'interpretation' of authentic selfless love I may trust the Spirit of God to lead me into the openness of life, to experience the freedom of bonding and intimacy, the richness and beauty of giving without losing anything.

The miracle of the paradigm of divine perichoresis lies, I think, in the principle of mutuality (interdependence). The more one seeks to unite, the more one's independence grows. The more a person is free and independent of others, the more he is able to sincerely commit himself to others. Real unity and self-reliance grow mutually. The unity Christ prayed for does not wipe out human personality or identity. On the contrary, identity is established by unifying factors and vice versa. The more I dare give myself to others, the more I will differ from them. Isolation is a detrimental enemy to the human soul. Loneliness disfigures and cripples the capacities of the heart. This brings me to the subject of my home country.

Holland is a western country coping with typical western problems, like the crisis of belonging and involvement, and the fragmentation of collective identities. Sociologists and trend-watchers reckon with ever increasing individualism, like 'cocooning' (wilfully and selfishly retreating into one's own life), and a rapid growth of the 'grey' social sector (elderly people). Moreover 'globalisation' and emerging 'Europeanising' will effectuate more cultural shifts than the country of proverbial tolerance has ever seen before. Already, we notice oncoming reservedness and (alas!) even intolerance. The open and 'xenophile' face of Holland is changing rapidly. Xenophobia is an oncoming mental disease, knocking on the doors of the hearts of too many nice people. Western Europe seems to be in a state of war, though there is no war. Holland is in a state of fear, though there is no enemy. Terrorism and all kinds of threats suppress our open culture and hold people back from unprejudiced listening to visitors, immigrants or fugitives crossing our borders. In a few decades 'strangers' will be no exception anymore. Holland will then be changed into a multi-racial village, with lots of ethnic and cultural diversity. Theological schools should anticipate these expectations and start to adjust their curricula now. The God Christians serve, however, challenges us – yes, he commands us – to leave our protective habits behind and try to connect to people who are so different from ourselves.

Western churches should learn from eastern orthodoxy to direct our concept of God, above all things, to motion. We tend to become introspective, because our thinking about God has, for ages, been characterised by passive tranquility; theology proper in the West strongly focused on God's unity and unifying qualities. Why not turn the logic upside down? Starting with incarnation theology, God's active mission to the world, we end up with a new perspective on his fixed immutability. Salvation history tells the story of God's people and the Messiah sent to

call and gather it. Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, took on flesh and, during his active ministry, moved continuously from place to place. The Son of man had nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:8). Salvation history, accordingly, is legitimated by unifying motion. It moves from action and diversity to unity. Why not project the same orientation back into God's eternal Trinity? God precisely is whom and how he shows himself to be.

Jesus was tangible and reached out to the sick, the guilty, the oppressed and lonely. John testifies in his first letter: 'What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life' (1 John 1:1). Jesus was no ghost or vague shadow. John uses these words of specific sensibility to correct wrong ideas about the humanity of Christ. False teachers denied Jesus' corporal condition. God would not intermingle with human affairs, they declared. Too much motion for a tranquil God. But not for John. He knew Jesus. He heard him speak, looked him in the eyes and touched him. Jesus was God's move towards man. God is pure action (*actus purus*), as is demonstrated in his mission to the world.

God-centred theological education should train students to relate to people like Jesus did. Knowing God, they build bridges and open up their lives. They are not afraid of strangers, new cultures, ethnic minorities and of making new friends. Christian students should learn by experience to use their freedom for unifying purposes. In seminaries, teachers have to teach and live the truth of God's perichoretic essence. In doing so they offer the sole model for Christians to fall back on in their relations. Dutch students in particular will have to rethink and evaluate their culture and dare to attempt to bridge the widening gaps in the multi-ethnic cultural reality.

Central in student thinking should be the clear conviction of God's motion and unity. God's perichoretic unity warrants ethnicity in all its cultural diversity. Creation mirrors, in every respect, the abundance of life and love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, intimacy with God cannot but open students up and prepare them for the beauty of multi-racial humanity. In theological education the notion of perichoretic unity should inspire staff and students to develop sensitive ethnic awareness and to appreciate a multiplicity of forms of prayer, Bible reading, fasting, contemplation, singing, dancing, preaching and dedication – don't teach only western, white, male, protestant spirituality. Now, here is my proposal for implementation of ethnic understanding in theological education.

First of all, courses in intercultural Bible reading and hermeneutics and intercultural preaching are necessary tools (course specifics have to be worked out). They equip students with new ways of understanding biblical

texts. Typical Dutch students are harshly but happily confronted with their own biases, pre-judgments and pre-understandings. No-one will ever be free of 'Vorverständnis' concerning texts that are so well known and have been read over and over again. Critical awareness of one's own hermeneutical fixations and habits is essential in every open discussion about ethnic self-understanding for the sake of real unity. How often did we serve fake unity, cherishing western, white, male, protestant ethnocentric ideas? Too often our drive for exegetical supremacy hampers real spiritual reciprocity. We, indeed, rule by all means the verbal Christian hemisphere, we feel the urge of teaching laws of interpretation, and cover as much communicative space as possible; leaving almost no room for complementary forms of learning.

Secondly, dogmatic theology should not be dominated by readings from western text books. Much theology nowadays is done in Asia, Africa and South America. Let us benefit from the fruit of Christian reflection presented by experts from these countries, especially because, as we have stated, the eastern mind is better suited to go along with the mysteries of spiritual intimacy and the surprises and complexities of human relations. All of biblical scripture comes from the east. All biblical authors were Middle Eastern people. Many of them were raised the Mediterranean way, with a high sense of community. In Mediterranean life all affairs concern communal life.¹⁷ Individualism as we know it did not exist. As a rule, the individual defined himself in terms of the many. A Mediterranean farmer in first century AD did not define himself by his wealth or business, but by his friends and family. His network was his status. No-one would normally think of leaving friends and family behind and begin a career alone. Family ties were strong and decisive in every field of life. Communal bonds, yes in every respect 'belonging', characterised the kernel of one's personality.

Qualities like honour and dignity and shame and blame were important values for Mediterranean individuals to learn to take into account. Ancient aretology (eulogies and panegyrics), rhetorical descriptions of personal noblesse, sport achievements and one's merits for the country, offer an honest impression of the value system of the middle-eastern man or woman. He or she, more than anything else, wished to live and die for family, friends and country, and measured personal self-esteem according to the results in these particular areas. Consequently, one could

¹⁷ See Bruce J Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospel* (London-New York: Routledge, 1996) pp. 35-96; Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians. Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) pp. 257-287; Wayne A Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1983) pp. 85-94.

easily be offensive and just as easily forgive and forget as well. Vital connections were strong enough to survive disappointments and anger or hurt. Like the Book of Proverbs says: 'It is the glory for a man to pass over a transgression' (Prov. 19:11). The power of honour – the history of good memories and the expectations we have – can make us mild and forgiving. Mediterranean people, for example, easily make and break agreements without being afraid of losing friendship.¹⁸ Of course, they are touchy and explosive – angry, they walk out on each other, but they don't really leave. This is almost Trinitarian: Father, Son and Spirit walk in and out on each other, but never really leave. That's how the Church of God should be. The sense of belonging has to be stronger than any feelings of aversion and the evidence of piles of guilt. Fear of loss of love in the East is a rare phenomenon – but not so in the West.

Thirdly, and lastly, in Holland, theological education should give much attention to building proper conditions and parameters for developing friendship and community. Teachers themselves have to set the example. Devotionals, prayer times, fasting, liturgy, are to create an atmosphere of continuous celebration. Students have to take part in a repetitive celebration of this life and the life to come. This certainly means that they cross spiritual borders, like God does. God and his people cross borders of eternity, of the past, and they cross borders of holy human souls. God himself is eternal celebration. Now let's celebrate like God and give ourselves without losing anything at all.

Interpenetrative prayer, mutual pastoral care, multi-cultural exchanges of Christian songs and symbols, moments of touching hands and hearts and communal retreats – all these are indispensable tools to prepare the lives of students for proclaiming Christ in multi-racial society. Such fellowship is healing fellowship. We hope and pray that students, in the East and the West, will be healed from prejudices. Many lost confidence in marriage, family life, friendship or Christian honesty. God is our hope. He is motion and expert in crossing borders. His grace in us makes us open up ourselves and lets other minds touch ours, irrespective of whether they are black or white, rich or poor, churched or unchurched. Christian spirituality and multi-ethnicity go well together. They belong together.

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¹⁸ See P F Esler, 'Making and Breaking an Agreement Mediterranean Style: A New Reading of Galatians 2:1-14', *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995) pp. 287-289.

Book Reviews

Ken R Manley

From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists
2 vols. Studies in Baptist History and Thought

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006, 856 pages.

All those interested in Baptist history are indebted to Ken Manley, Distinguished Professor of Church History at Whitley College, the University of Melbourne, and retired Principal of the College, for this outstanding two-volume history of Australian Baptists. Ken Manley has, in a remarkable way, combined in his account attention to the particular details of the Baptist story and a portrayal of the sweep of developments from 1831 to 2005. Not only so, but in page after page there are acute observations which stimulate thought about the significance of what was taking place. This book is a milestone in the writing of the histories of denominations.

Many of the readers of this journal are in Europe and may not feel that a book about Australian Baptists is one that has great relevance for them. However, the way in which Ken Manley has written means that anyone who is looking for insights into Baptist experience as a whole can find much that is valuable here. In addition, those who are looking beyond the Baptist world will discover an example of how a Christian community is shaped within its context.

For British Baptists there are many links. A significant number of Baptist leaders in Britain spent periods of time in Australia and there are many parallels that can be drawn between British and Australian Baptist life. The stories of an amazing range of individuals – such as the unusual John McKaeg, ‘a poor highlander’, or the famous David McLaren – who all contributed in their different ways to the early shaping of Australian Baptist life in the nineteenth century are vividly narrated. Later figures dealt with, who had important ministries in Australia but whose impact was transnational, include W.T. Whitley, Samuel Pearce Carey, F.C. Spurr and F.W. Boreham.

However, these volumes are far from being restricted to an analysis of a succession of Baptist leaders. There are extended sections in the first volume dealing with the role of women, including women revivalists; Australian Baptist understandings of baptism, worship, ministries, children's and youth work and the Baptist role in society. In the second

volume there is a similar range of topics, such as Baptists during the two world wars, the influence of America, cross-cultural mission, Aboriginal issues and the charismatic movement. Attention is also given to the painful theological tensions that Australian Baptists, like Baptists elsewhere, have experienced in the twentieth century.

In recent years Australian Baptists have made their own contribution to the world Baptist community: Tony Cupit as a Director of Evangelism and Education in the Baptist World Alliance, Tim Costello as chief executive of World Vision Australia, Athol Gill, with his concern for community, Marita Munro, the first woman ordained by Australian Baptists, and Ken Manley himself, who from 2000-2005 was a Vice-President of the BWA.

By the way, if you are puzzled about the title – as I was – then I have a word of advice: start reading the book, as the explanation comes early on. And once you have started this splendid study you will not be able to stop.

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Steven R Harmon

Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision
Paternoster Press, 2006, 275 pages.

This is a fascinating book by a north American exploring important areas of insight on the Baptist vision with reference to early church ecclesial practice and liturgy. Unfortunately, his grasp of the European Baptist scene is meager, despite many references to Baptist life in our continent. Consequently, the book will be of limited value to our EBF constituency.

Disappointingly, Harmon, whilst seeking to argue the case for a fuller sense of ‘catholicity’ amongst Baptists, appears to neglect that stream of our common ecumenical history which belongs to the gathering church tradition. He fails to draw on the radical ‘catholic’ past epitomised in the life and work of people like Hubmaier, who Harmon does not mention, though he appears to want to engage with the thinkers of the reformation.

What, then, are we to make of this book written from a strong north American bias, but published in Europe? Are there treasures to be mined even though the binoculars of the author are not focused on our world and life? Harmon is clearly regarded as an important thinker within the wider

Baptist family, serving on the current BWA - Roman Catholic Dialogue, and thus cannot be totally dismissed as irrelevant to us.

Harmon devotes a significant chapter to public worship, focusing on British Baptists. However, his concern for tradition is rather short-sighted as the majority of his reflection is limited to Christopher J Ellis and does not acknowledge the earlier seminal work of other British Baptists such as Stephen J Winward, Ernest A Payne, Neville Clark, Michael J Walker and Michael H Taylor. Harmon has a desire for regular celebration of the eucharist, which we applaud, but appears not to be aware of the deep tradition in the last century advocating such an approach here in Europe.

Harmon argues for Baptists to take more account of the creeds, drawing attention to the campaign by Curtis Freeman and others to have a creed recited at the BWA Centenary Congress. Of course, the global family decided to do this long before Freeman and Harmon entered the fray and the BWA produced an extensive centenary message by a process of consultation and reflection, of which Harmon, in this volume, seems unaware.

In short, though this book engages with the work of some European Baptists, there is a lack of deep appreciation of many of the aspects of European Baptist ecclesial life and worship, and the call he makes for renewal seems to be addressing another continent and not what is actually happening in Europe today.

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Björn Ryman, Aila Lauha, Gunnar Heiene, Peter Lodberg (eds.),
Nordic Folk Churches: A Contemporary Church History
Eerdmans, 2005, 168 pages.

This book, on the contemporary history and identity of Nordic folk churches, is the result of a joint project by a group of outstanding Lutheran theologians in Scandinavia. It is a popularised version of an academically more demanding 500-page volume published by Aarhus University in 2001, which brings together extensive research on Nordic folk churches and their national and international impact after 1945. In his introduction, Bishop Gunnar Stålsett, says pointedly: 'This presentation brings us to the

gray zone between history and journalism arguing the truth of the old Lutheran dictum *ecclesia semper reformanda*.' Indeed, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish folk churches have experienced considerable changes since World War II, a process in which secularisation and urbanisation, as well as new theological impulses and political changes have challenged both pietistic and classical Lutheranism in these countries.

The book offers easy-to-read church historical surveys. Much attention is paid to church-state relationships, church politics and the role of church leaders. Less is said about how the life of these churches looked from a local parish perspective or how the ordinary church members influenced or experienced church life. However, Aila Lauha's words about the Finnish Lutheran church can also be used to describe the situation in other Nordic folk churches: 'The church plays an important role at the time of both private and collective celebrations. It brings a sense of security and continuity to people's lives.' (p. 40) The book confirms the widely known fact that active participation in folk church worship services is very low in all Scandinavian countries. Peter Lodberg says this can be called 'belonging without participating'.

In the second half of the book, the reader finds helpful chapters on specific topics. The Nordic churches' involvement in ecumenical work, reflecting Nathan Söderblom's heritage, includes reconstruction of relationships with German churches after World War II, contributions to the World Council of Churches and Conference of European Churches, and help in development projects in the Third World. In Nordic society, folk churches face the situation where their 'monopoly ... on matters of faith and morality' has been challenged. (p. 107) Yet, there are areas where the voice of the churches is expected to offer assistance to find answers to questions which these welfare countries face. Can a theology of stewardship – 'with an emphasis on responsibility for God's creation' – help to limit self-centered consumerism? (p. 115) What has the church to say about evil in a 'good' society, especially after the murders of politicians Olof Palme (1986) and Anna Lindth (2003) in Sweden? A chapter on theology and spirituality adds an important aspect. It touches upon influences in Nordic theology (pietism and confessional Lutheranism, German and Anglo-American theological ideas), its unique contribution to wider theological discussion (Lundensian theology and research on Luther's theology), as well as recent attempts to apply a more integrated approach and be informed of the contextual character of theology.

To enjoy this book, one does not need to be a church historian. To learn from this book, one does not need to be a student of theology. And to reflect on church-society relations in the light of this book, one does not need to be a member of a folk church.

Toivo Pilli

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Anthony J Clarke and Paul S Fiddes (eds.)

Flickering Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue

Regent's Study Guides 12

Oxford/Macon, GA: Regent's Park College, Oxford/Smith and Helwys Publishing, Inc, 2005, 310 pages.

In 1990 I wrote a Master's dissertation on the use of film in adult religious education. At the time there was practically no literature available. In the subsequent sixteen years, this situation has changed, and now it seems to be one of the major areas of religious publishing. So, for any new book on the topic, what distinctive features does it bring to the discussion.

Flickering Images can perhaps claim to make several important contributions. The most interesting for the average reader (say, busy pastors who are glad to find that they no longer feel guilty about their love of film, but can make use of it) will be the third part of the book, which presents us with eleven films, all mainstream Hollywood and easily available. Alongside a fairly comprehensive synopsis, each film has a list of questions which can be used in discussion. This in itself provides a ready-made programme, but also indicates how one might use other films. The questions and films have been 'road-tested' on other groups, and my impression is that they would work very well in most groups who are ready to engage with film as a medium for learning.

For those whose interest is in more theoretical underpinnings of the relationship between theology and film, the first part of the book is likely to be the most rewarding. There is no space here to deal with all the individual chapters, but a comment on Steve Nolan's contribution 'Understanding Films: Reading in the Gaps' may serve as a taster. For me, this was probably the most interesting essay. It is certainly challenging, based as it is on a deep knowledge of contemporary film theory, especially drawing on French neo-Marxian psychoanalytic/structuralist critiques, and dealing

honestly with the general problem that marks most writing in this field. Essentially this amounts to plundering films for things that can be of theological use, in a way which tends to do violence to the integrity of the work and is sometimes embarrassingly superficial. Nolan argues that there are three ways in which theology can engage critically with film. It can examine the spectator's pseudo-identification (assuming the identity of the other – main character/star); thus, the spectator is joined into the narrative (time and space) of the film; and, therefore, the spectator is included into a narrative space that is always already ideological. These three ideas offer ways for theology to analyse the film, to see what forms of identification and ideology are being offered, and respond to them theologically.

The advantage of Nolan's contribution is that it seeks to avoid the sometimes banally analogous interpretation of film – 'this bit of the film reminds me/us of this bit of the gospel'. However, it is also not without its own problems. Structuralist film theory, as even Nolan himself admits, is not the only way to understand film, and theologians are not primarily addressing film critics when they use film. Here perhaps Anthony Clarke, with his background in community learning, offers a broader perspective of how theology can engage with film in a pastoral setting. Eschewing an overly simplistic approach, he nevertheless indicates how it is possible to use film to open up discussion on various theological questions. Clarke shows how images from films can allow us to see things in new ways, and enable us to be questioned.

It seems to me that it is in this dialectical hermeneutic that the dialogue between theology and film is best situated. On the one hand, we can question films and what they tell us about one way of viewing the world in which we live, and we can ask those questions also theologically. But, equally importantly, on the other hand, films can question us, point us beyond where we have been happy to stay, demand more of us than we had thought ourselves willing to give.

One of the qualities of this book is that on the whole the contributors engage especially with the second pole of the dialectic in ways which are often insightful and illuminating. The choice of films in the second part – entitled 'Reflections' – is interesting, even at times surprising. Some of the films I would never have considered as offering anything other than a few hours' entertainment, so being encouraged to see them with new eyes was helpful for me. There will always be disagreement on this, but it seems to me this is another area where film can contribute. The very fact that we do not always agree about the qualities of films, or 'authorial' intention, or the

‘right’ response, can help us to realise that it is possible to survive with different interpretations of the same text, all of which may have something of the truth, even if none of them possess that truth in its entirety.

To sum up, this is an interesting and useful book. I would imagine that it will be of most use to those who are interested in the way in which theology and film interact, and especially those who want to work with film in their pastoral ministries. Here it offers both theoretical and practical contributions, which will enable anyone who is interested to work with films in a number of productive ways. It will be impossible to agree with all that is written here, partly because there has been no attempt to force contributors to agree with each other. But that is, I would suggest, one of the best recommendations for this book.

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